

## Sūrah Dhāriyāt

### Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous one

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah Qāf the previous *sūrah*. Readers have read in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Qāf that people who were regarding as improbable the claim of the Qur'ān that man will be recreated after his death were answered. In this *sūrah*, a step ahead is taken and the Qur'ānic warnings of punishment as well as reward and punishment are also validated. The central theme of the *sūrah* is explained in its introductory verses as: *إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَصَادِقٌ وَإِنَّ الدِّينَ لَوَاقِعٌ* (indeed what you are being threatened with is true and reward and punishment shall necessarily take place, (5-6)). The *sūrah* is addressed to the rejecters of the Quraysh, and the arguments are based on the reasoning found in the world within man and that around him. At the end, the Prophet (sws) is assured the way he was in the previous *sūrah*.

### Analysis of the Discourse

**Verses (1-14):** By referring to the diverse manifestations of the winds and striped winter clouds, ignorant people who make fun of the Day of reward and punishment by mockingly questioning about its time of arrival are severely reprimanded for their behaviour. They are warned that the doom that shall descend upon them if they deny the Prophet (sws) as well as the Day of Reckoning about which they are being warned of both are certain to come. Only those who have lost their senses are daring to doubt their certainty. Those who are seeking to hasten that day shall be told that this was what they had sought to hasten.

**Verses (15-19):** In contrast to the disbelievers, a mention is made of the reward the righteous shall receive, who instead of being inebriated with indifference had spent their lives while remaining fearful of the Day, who slept but little at night and in the early hours of dawn sought their Lord's forgiveness and in whose wealth the deprived had a share.

**Verses (20-23):** The signs in the heavens and the earth, as well as in the human soul, which testify to the Day of Judgement are alluded to and then it is stated on oath that just as it is very easy for a person to utter a word, creating mankind a second time is as easy for the Almighty.

**Verses (24-37):** Evidence from history, which further substantiates the imminence of the Day of Judgement, is presented by referring to the

anecdotes of Abraham (sws) and Lot (sws). The same angels who had brought glad tidings for Abraham (sws) that he would be blessed with a son had unleashed a raging punishment on the people of Lot (sws). God destroyed those who had denied the Prophet Lot (sws), and had saved those who had professed faith in him. These events bear witness historically that the Creator of this Universe takes account of what nations do: the people of Lot (sws) were punished in retribution of their own misdeeds. There is a lesson for those who are fearful of the Almighty in this episode, for the remains of their cities have been preserved by Him.

**Verses (38-46):** A brief mention is made of the incidents of the Pharaoh and the people of ‘Ād and the Thamūd, and the folks of Noah who showed indifference to the law of retribution of nations and did not pay heed to the warnings of their respective messengers. They were totally destroyed by the Almighty Who did not have to do much for this; He just ordered the winds and the clouds to unleash their terror on them.

**Verses (47-60):** In this concluding section, the whole theme of the *sūrah* has been summed up: It is not difficult for the Almighty, Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and Who has created everything in pairs to create this world a second time: If the Day of Reckoning is certain to come, then people should run towards the Almighty and seek only His nearness. At the end, the Prophet (sws) is assured that all the other prophets before him received no different a treatment at the hands of their people. He is advised to leave these rebellious people to themselves and to remind only those who will benefit from these reminders. He is further consoled by the Almighty that men and jinn have been created by Him only to worship Him. He has not imposed any responsibility on them to feed others nor does He Himself seek sustenance from them. Indeed, He Himself is the Provider of all, Lord of Might and Power. He alone is enough to sustain and provide all those who, irrespective of the circumstances, set out to befittingly worship Him. He shall help them in their endeavours as well and no one would be able to harm them. As far as the wrongdoers are concerned, they shall get in this world what has been ordained for them. In spite of all their outcries to the Almighty to hasten the Day of Judgement, they shall be given the respite needed so that the truth is communicated to them in its ultimate form after which they can have no excuse to deny. Finally, when this period is over, as deemed by the Almighty, they shall encounter the Day about which they are being warned.

---

## Text and Translation

## Section I: Verses (1-14)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالذَّارِيَّاتِ ذَرُورًا (١) فَالْحَامِلَاتِ وِقْرًا (٢) فَالْجَارِيَّاتِ يُسْرًا (٣) فَلَمَقَسَّمَاتٍ أَمْرًا (٤) إِنَّمَا  
تُوْعَدُونَ لَصَادِقٍ (٥) وَإِنَّ الدِّينَ لَوَاقِعٌ (٦) وَالسَّمَاءَ ذَاتِ الْخُبُكِ (٧) إِنَّكُمْ لَفِي قَوْلٍ  
مُخْتَلِفٍ (٨) يُؤْفَكُ عَنْهُ مَنْ أُفِكَ (٩) فُتِلَ الْخَرَّاصُونَ (١٠) الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي عَمْرَةٍ سَاهُونَ  
(١١) يَسْأَلُونَ أَيَّانَ يَوْمُ الدِّينِ (١٢) يَوْمَ هُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ يُفْتَنُونَ (١٣) ذُوقُوا فِتْنَتَكُمْ هَذَا  
الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ (١٤)

In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

Fierce winds that scatter dust, then lift a burden, then glide slowly, then apportion matters testify that the punishment you are being threatened with is true and indeed reward and punishment shall certainly take place. The striped winter clouds bear witness. Indeed you are in a state of difference of opinion. Only those who have lost their senses evade it. Accursed be those who wildly guess, who dwell in indifference, totally unaware. They ask: “When will the Day of Judgement come?” The day when they shall be baked in fire. Taste of your mischief. This is what you had sought to hasten. (1-14)

## Explanation

وَالذَّارِيَّاتِ ذَرُورًا (١) فَالْحَامِلَاتِ وِقْرًا (٢) فَالْجَارِيَّاتِ يُسْرًا (٣) فَلَمَقَسَّمَاتٍ أَمْرًا (٤)<sup>1</sup>

The وَ in ذَرُورًا وَالذَّارِيَّاتِ signifies an oath. I have been explaining at a number of places in this *tafsīr* that the oaths which are sworn by such objects are not meant to sanctify these objects; the purpose is to bear witness to the truth of a claim which is mentioned later or is evident from the context. Thus this oath is too is meant to bear witness. It would be very meaningful in my opinion if وَ is translated as “bears witness”.

The word ذَارِيَّاتٌ refers to winds which scatter dust. This word is used as an attribute of the winds and so common has it become for the noun it qualifies that it is used in its very place as its substitute. The addition of ذَرُورًا after ذَارِيَّاتٌ adds emphasis and stress in the meaning conveyed just as in the case of ضَرَبَ ضَرْبًا the verb has been emphasized. It becomes difficult at

1. Fierce winds that scatter dust, then lift a burden, then glide slowly, then apportion matters.

times to translate such an emphasis. Here if the word “fierce” is added to winds, then in my opinion the intended meaning would be conveyed.

فَالْحَامِلَاتِ وَفُرَا: when adjectives are conjugated by the particle ف then this signifies two things: firstly, there is a sequence between them and secondly, these adjectives qualify the same noun. As per this linguistic rule of Arabic, the three adjectives which are mentioned here are necessarily of the winds. The opinion of those who have regarded them to be adjectives of separate nouns is against this rule as well as the parallels of the Qur’ān in this regard.

In Sūrah ‘Ādiyāt the words are:

وَالْعَادِيَاتِ ضَبْحًا فَالْمُورِيَاتِ قَدْحًا فَالْمُغِيرَاتِ صُبْحًا فَأَثَرْنَ بِهِ نَقْعًا فَوَسَطْنَ بِهِ جَمْعًا (٩٩:١-٥)

Panting, galloping horses bear witness which then produce fire by thumping their hooves, then plunder at dawn, then scatter dust, then barge into a throng. (99:1-5)

Obviously, all these attributes are not of separate entities; all of them relate to horses, and deliberation would show that there is a sequence as well in their mention.

There are many examples of this style in classical Arabic literature. I will just cite one example here. A famous couplet of Ibn Ziyābah reads:

يا لهف زيا به للحارث  
الصايح فالغانم فالآتب

(An expression of grief from Ziyābah on Ḥārith who attacked, plundered and went away.)<sup>2</sup>

The word وَفُر means “burden and load”. In general, it includes all burden and load which are borne by winds for example dust and pebbles; however, it conventionally connotes clouds. Thus for example, it is said:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيَّاحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَقْلَتِ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سُقْنَاهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَأَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَاءَ (٥٧:٧)

2. Al-Tabrayzī, *Dīwān al-ḥamāsah*, vol. 1, 39.

He it is Who sends forth the winds as glad tidings before His merciful rain until when they have gathered up a heavy cloud, We drive them on to some dead land and let the rain fall upon it. (7:57)

The attribute فَالْجَارِيَاتِ يُسْرًا also qualifies winds. The view of people who regard them to refer to ships is incorrect in the light of the principle I have referred to above. The word يُسْرًا means “slow and soft”. This is a common norm that first fast and dust-laden winds blow; then they gather clouds from various places and stack them in layers on the place where they have been divinely directed to drench; then these winds become slow and soft and they cause rain to come down.

Consider next the expression: فَالْمُقَسَّمَاتِ أَمْرًا. The words الْقَسَمِ الْأَمْرُ would mean that whatever had been decided for something or what had been ordained for it was received by it. The verse means that after bringing forth clouds on their backs, these winds divide matters, which means that they rain down whatever water they had been directed to on a particular area. Some places are completely drenched and some places are left half thirsty and some places are left totally dry and if the Almighty directs them, they completely flood a place which as a result is utterly routed. These multifarious effects caused by winds at various places are amazing. They deal with one nation in one manner and with another in another manner. For one nation, these merciful clouds descend as glad tidings; for another, these clouds stir up the torment of storms. Details are forthcoming.

إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَصَادِقٌ (٥) وَإِنَّ الدِّينَ لَوَاقِعٌ (٦)<sup>3</sup>

These verses form the *muqsam ‘alayh* (complement of oath) of the above oaths: these multifarious effects of winds which people persistently observe bear witness that what they have been threatened with is absolutely true and that reward and punishment will definitely take place.

In the opinion of my mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī, the word تُوعَدُونَ is from وَعَدَ and covers all things promised by the prophets.<sup>4</sup> They include the Hereafter, reward and punishment, mercy and ruthlessness. To him the next verse: وَإِنَّ الدِّينَ لَوَاقِعٌ is a mention of the specific after the general. However, I am inclined to believe that the word تُوعَدُونَ is from وَعِيد and here it refers to that specific punishment which necessarily afflicts his addressees who deny their messenger. In other words, my

3. Testify that the punishment you are being threatened with is true and indeed reward and punishment shall certainly take place.

4. Al-Farāhī, *Majmū‘ah tafāsīr*, 97-98.

opinion is that the oaths sworn by the multifarious effects produced by the winds is for two reasons: firstly, the punishment with which the Quraysh are being threatened with in case of their rejection of the truth and which they were only regarding as a bluff, is not a bluff; it is a threat that is certain to materialize; secondly, reward and punishment is bound to come which they are regarding as improbable.

I find several arguments going in favour of my view; details are not required; however, I will allude to three things here.

Firstly, the occasion of both these components of the *muqṣam* 'alayh is ascertained as two separate entities in a very natural way.

Secondly, the messengers of God warned their people of two punishments: firstly, the punishment that they will face in this world if they persist in their denial; secondly, the punishment that they will necessarily face in the Hereafter if they die on disbelief. Both these types of punishments are mentioned in the Hereafter and I have been explaining this throughout. This requires that both these punishment be mentioned such that oaths bear evidence to them. Details are forthcoming.

Thirdly, in the forthcoming verses, the Qur'ān has referred to certain nations who had denied their respective messengers and these events are mentioned as a substantiation of the threat alluded to in these verses. At these instances, readers can see that the Qur'ān has specially highlighted the multifarious effects produced by the winds.

Here an important point worthy of consideration is that the threatened punishment of this world is mentioned in verbs while the reward and punishment of the Hereafter is mentioned in nouns. The reason for this is that the punishment which was meted in this world to various nations were specific events and conditional to certain factors. However, reward and punishment of the Hereafter is an essential consequence of the purpose for which this world has been created. For this reason, the first of these is mentioned as a verb and the second as a noun.

وَالسَّمَاءَ ذَاتِ الْحُبُكِ (٧)<sup>5</sup>

The word السَّمَاءَ can refer both to the sky and to the clouds. It is used in both these meanings in the Qur'ān. However, if it is interpreted to mean the sky, then it has to be understood together with the attribute of ذَاتِ الْحُبُكِ appended to it. For this reason, it is this attribute which needs research. My mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī has researched out the meaning of this attribute in his *tafsīr* of Sūrah Dhāriyāt in the light of the parallels of classical Arabic literature. I will try to summarize it in his

---

5. The striped winter clouds bear witness.

own words in the following paragraphs:

The word حَبَكُ means “to fasten and to tie a knot”. Here it is used for the strength and firmness which is incorporated in the structure of a thing. The word حَبَاك has sprung from this word. Its plural is حُبُك which refers to the stripes and lines which are made evident in some thick or other cloth made of strong stuff. In the opinion of al-Farrā, the word حُبُك refers to the stripes and ripples which are created in sand or stationed water when wind blows over them. From here, this word came to be used for clouds as well because clouds also appear in the sky in the form of stacked waves and piled up layers of cotton flakes. Imru’ al-Qays while praising towering castles on which clouds are overspread says:

مكللة حمراء ذات أسرة  
لها حبك كأنها من وصائل

(Hovering over these castles are red-striped clouds as if they are striped sheets of cloth.)<sup>6</sup>

This is a description of the winter clouds and a very true depiction of their colour and being stacked in layers ...

People who have interpreted the expression to mean ذَاتِ الْحُبُك (the sky decked with stars) whether from the aspect of its strength and stability or because stars are knitted in it have erred in this view ... this word is used for stripes, lines, wrinkles and waves.<sup>7</sup>

In the light of this research by Imām Farāhī, this oath is sworn by the red-striped winter clouds which appear with the cold northern winds and which had great role in the destruction of previous nations who had incurred the wrath of God (details are forthcoming). In other words, after winds, this oath by the clouds is in fact a completion of the previous oath. The reason for this is that wind and clouds are inseparable. The addition of this oath is meant to specially point to the destructive nature of the winds.

6. ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn ‘Umar al-Baghdādī, *Khazānah al-adab fī lubb-i lubāb lisān al-‘arab*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., vol. 11 (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, n.d.), 186.

7. Al-Farāhī, *Majmū‘ah tafāsīr*, 98-99.

إِنَّكُمْ لَفِي قَوْلٍ مُّخْتَلِفٍ<sup>8</sup> (٨)

It is evident from concomitant indication that this verse is not the *muqsam 'alayh* (complement of oath). It is a rebuke on the attitude adopted by the adversaries of the Prophet (sws). The *muqsam 'alayh* has already been stated earlier. And since the second oath is only a completion of the first one, there is no need to repeat the *muqsam 'alayh* after it. In place of it, the rejecters of the Quraysh are ticked off. They are told that they are inflicted with an open difference of opinion and contradiction; otherwise in the presence of these testimonies neither is there any possibility of denying the warnings of the punishment nor is there any reason to doubt the promised reward and punishment.

There are many examples found in the Qur'ān in which because of concomitant indication there occurs in place of the *muqsam 'alayh* a sentence of reprimand and reproach. A very obvious example of this has already been witnessed in Sūrah Qāf, the previous *sūrah*:

ق وَالْقُرْآنِ الْمَجِيدِ بَلْ عَجِبُوا أَنْ جَاءَهُمْ مُنْذِرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَقَالَ الْكَافِرُونَ هَذَا شَيْءٌ  
عَجِيبٌ (٥٠: ٢-١)

This is Sūrah Qāf. By the glorious Qur'ān! [This is the word of God]. In fact, they were confounded by the fact that a warner from amongst themselves had come to them. So these disbelievers had said: “This is a very strange thing.” (50:1-2)

One can see that the *muqsam 'alayh* is not present here; in its place the adversaries are rebuked for their blatant dishonesty. This very style is adopted in Sūrah Burūj thus:

وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الْبُرُوجِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْمَوْعُودِ وَشَاهِدٍ وَمَشْهُودٍ قُتِلَ أَصْحَابُ الْأُخْدُودِ (٨٧: ٤)

By the heavens consisting of forts and the promised day and one who sees and that what is seen. Doomed are the companions of the ditch of fuelled-fire. (87:1-4)

The expression قَوْلٍ مُّخْتَلِفٍ refers to their contradiction with relation to the Hereafter and reward and punishment. I have written at many places in this *tafsīr* that not all the disbelievers openly denied the Hereafter. Together with the deniers, there existed a group of hesitants who did not openly reject it; they only regarded it to be improbable. Similarly, there

---

8. Indeed you are in a state of difference of opinion.



existed a large group among them who did not regard the Hereafter to be improbable; they reckoned that their matter will be resolved in the Hereafter through the help of their deities and intercessors who will save them through their intercession. This group on the one hand acknowledged all the attributes of God which were His obvious and essential attributes and which necessitated reward and punishment; on the other hand, they either had doubts about the obvious consequences of these attributes or denied them. It is to this contradiction and confusion of theirs which this verse refers to. The purpose is to tell them that what the Qur'ān is informing them of is an obvious reality of this universe only if they allow their minds to think correctly and not unnaturally hinder this thought process. Readers are advised to look up what I have written under (٥) *فَهُمْ فِي أَمْرٍ مَّرِيجٍ* of the previous *sūrah*. In my opinion, both instances depict the same reality.

يُؤْفَكُ عَنْهُ مَنْ أُفِكَ<sup>9</sup>

This is an independent sentence and not an attribute of *قَوْلٍ مُخْتَلِفٍ*. The implication is that if these people think after cleansing themselves of this contradiction, then the matter of reward and punishment is an obvious reality; however people whose intellect has lost its way are led to reject it. The word *إُفِكَ* means “to lose way” and the word *مَنْ أُفِكَ* refers to a person who has lost his senses. This is actually an allusion to the established practice of God stated in (٥: ٦١) *فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ* (so when they went astray, God led their very hearts astray, (61:5)) and in other similar verses. In other words, when people did not properly use their sense the Almighty according to His law made them lose their senses. As a result, they are not even being able to see what is being borne witness to by every nook and corner of this universe.

قُتِلَ الْخَرَّاصُونَ<sup>10</sup> (١٠) الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي غَمْرَةٍ سَاهُونَ

This sentence is also meant to scold and rebuke them: these people indulge in conjecture a lot and have stopped using their intellect. For this reason, they are not being able to understand the arguments drawn from the world within man and from the one outside him which the Qur'ān is directing their attention to. Being deprived of sagacity, they are now relying entirely on conjecture and speculation. It is on the basis of this

9. Only those who have lost their senses evade it.

10. Accursed be those who wildly guess, who dwell in indifference, totally unaware.

very conjecture and speculation that they are prepared to reject the obvious truth which is against their desires even though conjecture can in no way take the place of truth. In fact, one day it will become evident to them that the very support they took from speculation to deny the truth was the real reason for their doom.

The word خرس means “to make an estimate”. The expression خرس النخل و الكرم means “palm trees or the fruits of grape wines were estimated”. The expression خرس في الحديث would mean that without reflecting on something, a mere speculation about it was circulated.

The more important and far-reaching a matter is in the life of a person, the more has the Almighty made arrangements for its understanding and comprehension. He has left only those matters to estimates and conjectures which have no specific importance as far as the consequences are concerned. Matters which are important and which have far-reaching consequences and on which depends the well-being and salvation of a person have not been left to estimation and speculation. He has made them conclusively evident from all aspects so that man is not left with any excuse to deny them. Speculating in such matters is as if a person in a dark night puts off the light the Almighty has provided him and while closing his eyes tries to find his way through mere guesswork.

The most important matter for a person is his fate. For this reason, the Almighty has not left it ambiguous from any aspect. He has guided him from various directions towards the right path so that no possibility of any error remains. He has implanted signs in every part of the heavens and the earth which guide a person to the right path. He has blessed him with eyes which can see these signs if he only cares to use them. He has given him intellect which understands or can understand these signs if he only tries to properly benefit from it. Besides this, the Almighty has innately blessed man with all those inclinations and motivations which are essential to keep a person continuously vigilant in making him adhere to the right path and combat dangers and difficulties. The most ultimate arrangement made by Him in this regard is that through His prophets and messengers and through the Books revealed to them, He has fully made clear the right path as well as the provisions needed to tread this path.

If even after these diverse arrangements made he does not benefit from them and instead uses his conjecture and whims to find some other path to tread, then this clearly means that he dislikes light and wants to wander in the darkness.

The words الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي غَمْرَةٍ سَاهُونَ state an attribute of those who use their whims and conjecture. It throws light on the reason why they

abandoned the light of God and made their whims and fancies as their guide. The verse says that the reason is that they are surrounded by the darkness of the whims and desires of their fancies and have been inflicted with such negligence that they are unable to come out of this state. The word *عَمْرَةٍ* refers to the darkness of one's base desires and greed for this world. The word *سَاهُونَ* is another enunciative after the first which shows the continuity of their negligence. They have been gripped to such an extent by these things that they do not want to come out of them. If someone tries to wake them up from this slumber and tries to inform them of the reality this weighs down heavily upon them and in order to keep themselves assured, they try to rely on the most baseless of supports they can lay hands on.

يَسْأَلُونَ أَيَّانَ يَوْمُ الدِّينِ (١٢)<sup>11</sup>

In order to shut the mouths of those are informing them of reward and punishment, they would inquire from them about its whereabouts. They would ask them when it would appear. The question encompasses rejection, making fun and showing haste – all three things on their part. In other words, what they would imply is that if such a day is to come, then why is it not coming and that their ears are tired of listening to its threats; it has neither come in all this time nor is there any chance of its coming in the future; it is a mere bluff from which they are trying to over-awe them; if there is any truth in it, then they should bring it; without actually observing it, they will not be over-awed by such baseless threats.

The Qur'ān has cited this question of theirs to show that such people try to evade the reality by taking refuge in such lame excuses. This is in spite of the fact that they fully know that if the advent of the Day of Judgement is substantiated by the arguments found in the world within man and the one outside him and if its advent is an essential requirement of the attributes of the Creator of this world, then they cannot deny it by saying that those who are warning them of it are unable show it to them or are unable to tell them about the time of its arrival.

Such an argument is tantamount to denying a reality through conjecture and guesswork. For this reason, the Qur'ān has used the word *خَرَّاصُونَ* for such people.

يَوْمَ هُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ يُفْتَنُونَ (١٣)<sup>12</sup>

11. They ask: "When will the Day of Judgement come?"

12. The day when they shall be baked in fire.

The question cited above was not genuine, as has been indicated and was actually meant to refute and make fun of what they were being threatened with. For this reason, the Qur'ān has answered it keeping in view their mentality. It should be evident that those who ask such questions were not unaware of the fact that only God knew the time of its advent and that no one else had this information and ignorance of something cannot change the actual reality. For this reason, instead of answering their question, the Qur'ān has actually portrayed before them what will happen when the Day will actually arrive: the Day of reward and punishment will take place when they will be cooked in Fire. The implication is that if they want to make fun of it, they are free to do it but they should remember what will befall them when it comes.

I have already presented my research on the word فَتَنَ at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*. This word also means to burn and heat something and also to test and try someone by making him pass through a trial. Here the word يُفْتَنُونَ refers to both these meanings. First to the meaning of heating and burning something, and second to the meaning that the fire in which they will be burnt will be the fire of their desires and worldly adornments they had remained engrossed in the previous world and because of whose love they became indifferent to the Day of Judgement. Explanation is forthcoming.

ذُوقُوا فِتْنَتَكُمْ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ (١٤)<sup>13</sup>

In my opinion, the word فِتْنَةٍ relates to its object ie. the things of the world which became a trial for them and whose love induced them to evade the Hereafter have now come before them in their real form; so they should now taste them. This is precisely what they were showing haste for.

### Testimonies of Reward and Punishment found in the Effects caused by Clouds and Winds

Here readers may stop and further reflect on the oaths cited above and their relationship with their *muqṣam* 'alayh so that it becomes fully evident that these oaths actually substantiate and verify their *muqṣam* 'alayh.

Two things are sworn by at the beginning of the *sūrah* and after this two claims are stated. Oaths are sworn by the multifarious effects produced by winds and by the striped clouds. The first claim stated is

---

13. Taste of your mischief. This is what you had sought to hasten.

that the punishment with which they are being threatened with must not be regarded as baseless; it is bound to come. The second claim is that the reward and punishment they are being informed of must not be regarded improbable by them; it too is certain to take place.

Now, readers may reflect on the nature of this relationship between the claim and its substantiation. The first claim is that *إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَصَادِقٌ* (indeed, the punishment with which you are being threatened with is absolutely true). While explaining this verse, I have already tried to elucidate the fact that this refers to that punishment with which every messenger warned his people of: if they did not change their attitude of denial, they shall necessarily be seized by divine punishment.

In this claim, the testimony of reward and punishment found in the effects of the winds and clouds is that however much a nation is resourceful and however much it is powerful and mighty, it should not consider itself beyond God's grasp. God does not need to do much to ravage a nation He wants to destroy; He can do so whenever He wants to merely through His clouds and winds. Just as these elements are needed for man's existence and sustenance, they are powerful enough to even destroy him. Further ahead in the *sūrah*, in order to substantiate this claim in the light of history, the examples of the people of Noah (sws), the 'Ād, the Thamūd, the nation of Lot (sws) and the people of the Pharaoh are put forth in which it is shown that these nations and peoples had great vanity in their power and might. As a result of this vanity, they made fun of the warnings of their respective messengers and demanded from them to bring about the punishment they were threatening them with and that they were ready to face it. At last, His punishment seized them and for this God did not need to make any elaborate arrangement. The very wind which is essential for life became a ravaging storm for them and the very clouds which made them dance with joy claiming *هَذَا عَارِضٌ مُّمْطَرُنَا* (clouds which will drench us, (46:24-25)) became the scourge of God for them. Here readers may content themselves with these brief allusions; details of the destruction of these nations are forthcoming in the *sūrah*. The Qur'ān has shown there that these mighty nations of the world were inflicted with the same conceit as the Quraysh were in their times. At last, the winds and clouds of God totally routed them in the blink of an eye and they could not stand for a moment against their onslaught. These armies of God are present even today to seize the Quraysh and await His command. History bears witness on the feats of these winds and clouds.

Similarly, these clouds and winds bear witness from many aspects to the second claim viz. the happening of reward and punishment.

The majesties of God's power, wisdom, mercy and providence which manifest as a result of the interaction between clouds and winds have been used by the Qur'ān at various places to adduce many basic facts. There is not just a single sign in them; they carry multifarious signs on the condition that a person reflects on them. In this regard, the following verse is a very comprehensive one:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي  
الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ  
مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (٢: ١٦٤)

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of night and day and in these ships that sail in the ocean with cargoes beneficial to man and in the water which God sends down from the sky with which He enlivens the earth after its death, dispersing over it all kinds of living beings and in the manifestations caused by the winds, and in the obedient clouds that are between sky and earth – surely in these there are signs for men of intellect. (2:164)

In this verse, the effects caused by the winds and the clouds are specially mentioned, and at the end it is said that in them there are many signs for people who reflect. These signs relate to monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter and have already been referred to at relevant places of this *tafsīr*. Here, I will just briefly allude to those signs which relate to the *muqṣam* 'alayh ie. reward and punishment.

A very big doubt raised by the rejecters against reward and punishment is that it is highly improbable that a person be raised to life again once he dies and his body decays. This doubt has been discussed in detail in the previous *sūrah*. To refute this doubt among the various arguments presented by the Qur'ān, a prominent one which is presented repeatedly by it in various styles relates to the effects of the winds and the clouds. People who regard the Hereafter to be improbable are called to reflect on a phenomena they witness every now and then: they often see a land which is totally desolate and dry and there is no form of life in any part of it; suddenly, a wind starts to blow from some direction which then steers some clouds to that place; it then has them stacked upon each other on the horizon of that land; then rain starts to descend from the clouds and very soon the whole area is drenched with water; and then not many days pass

when that very land which was once dry and desolate teems with life and becomes lush and luxuriant. If they see these majesties of God's power every now and then, how can raising them back to life after their death be a difficult proposition for Him if He intends to do so.

Similarly, the Almighty has also argued from the effects of these winds and clouds which are responsible for sustaining a whole system of providence. This elaborate arrangement necessitates reward and punishment. How this can be adduced is as follows: the heavens and the earth are closed; neither do the heavens send down rain nor does the earth produce plant life; this only happens when God causes conducive winds to blow from some direction; these winds then bring forth moisture-laden clouds and soak the land; as a result, the earth starts to eject its treasures; the orchards become lush; the crops start to bloom; fields swell with vegetation that not only is beneficial for man but also for his animals. So man should reflect that will the God Who has made such elaborate arrangements for him that He has put the heavens and the earth and the winds and the clouds to his service leave him to merely indulge in these luxuries? Will He not bring forth a day in which He judges whether man realized his obligation towards these favours and lived in gratitude to God? Will He not see who among His creatures used the very favours He had bestowed on them to rebel against Him? It is the right of every favour that a person show gratitude on it and the awareness of accountability for every favour has been ingrained in man by the Almighty. Only those people are devoid of this awareness who pervert their nature.

Similarly, the Almighty has also employed the effects of the winds and the clouds to substantiate His law of retribution: He instantaneously makes these winds and clouds a mercy for one nation and a torment for another. It was through the agency of these winds and clouds that He rescued Moses (sws) and his nation and it is through them that He destroyed the Pharaoh and his army. It is evident from this that the Creator of this universe rewards and punishes people: He will not deal in the same manner with the righteous and the wrong-doers; He will deal with each of them in accordance with the requisites of His justice and mercy. Readers are advised to look up the *tafsīr* of verse four: **فَالْمُقْسَمَاتِ أَمْرًا** of this *sūrah* given above. This attribute of the winds is thus a manifestation of their Creator's attribute of justice. This bears witness to the fact that a day will necessarily come when God will distribute affairs: those worthy of salvation and mercy will be blessed with His graciousness and forgiveness and those worthy of punishment and torment will be cast into Hell.

## Section II: Verses (15-19)

Earlier those people are mentioned who lead a life of indifference and have no concern for the promised reward and punishment. If someone tried to wake them from their slumber of indifference, they tried to silence him by asking about the whereabouts of the Day of Judgement and asking him to bring it. Now in the next section the fate of those people is being mentioned who regarded this Day to be a reality and kept fearing it and prepared themselves for it.

Readers may now proceed to read these verses.

### Text and Translation

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (١٥) آخِذِينَ مَا آتَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُحْسِنِينَ (١٦) كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ (١٧) وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ (١٨) وَفِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ (١٩)

Indeed, the righteous shall dwell amidst gardens and springs, receiving what has been blessed to them by their Lord. Indeed, they had been among the virtuous before. They slept but little at night and in the early hours of dawn sought forgiveness, and in whose wealth the deprived and those who ask had a share. (15-19)

### Explanation

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (١٥)<sup>14</sup>

The word مُتَّقِينَ (pious) is a comprehensive attribute used by the Qur'ān for all those who lead their lives within the bounds and limits set by God. Here too, they are primarily referred to; however, since in the earlier verses, those people are mentioned who are indifferent to the Hereafter and to reward and punishment, here in contrast those people are especially alluded to who are heedful to reward and punishment. Thus it specially refers to those people who always regarded themselves to be accountable for every undertaking of theirs and knew that they will be punished for all excesses. In reality, this fear for reward and punishment is the real spirit of *taqwā* (piety). A *taqwā* devoid of this spirit is mere ostentation and pretension which carries no weight before God. About the true pious it is said in this verse that they will be amidst orchards and

14. Indeed, the righteous shall dwell amidst gardens and springs.



springs. Earlier the fate of the indifferent was mentioned that they will be cooked in the fire worked up by the very adornments of this world which had lured them away from the Hereafter, and they will be told to taste these adornments. On the other hand, since these people never gave any importance to these adornments, the Almighty will admit them to gardens and springs. Both جَنَّاتٍ (gardens) and عُيُونٍ (springs) are inseparable, and these two words in fact are meant to comprehensively cover all the favours of the Hereafter. The word فِي alludes to the fact they will be surrounded by the favours of the Hereafter and they will find these favours being showered on them wherever they turn to.

أَخْذِينَ مَا آتَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُحْسِنِينَ (١٦)<sup>15</sup>

This is a portrayal of how these people will freely benefit from these favours. The word أَخْذِينَ is an accusative of state (حال) and thus depicts the situation: at every instant, they will be receiving from their Lord what He will be blessing them with. The past tense used in مَا آتَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ shows that as far as blessing them is concerned, its decision and promise has already been made by the Almighty earlier on. They will not require a new decision for this; it will precisely be the time to benefit from these blessings. Whatever they desire and whenever they desire in whatever amount, they will be able to get from unlimited treasures of their Lord. There shall be no restriction on them. They observed the restrictions which their Lord imposed on them in the previous world. In reward for this, the Almighty will allow them to freely benefit from His favours: they can use them in whatever way they like; no restriction now remains on them.

The words إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُحْسِنِينَ refer to the reason for granting them these great favours: these people remained among the مُحْسِنِينَ (*muḥsinīn*) in the previous world. I have translated in Urdu this word as *khūb kār* because it refers to people who try to follow the directives of their Lord in the most befitting way. This quality is found only in those people in whom the belief in the Hereafter has fully taken root. Such people do deeds as if they are witnessing God because they have the conviction that if they are not being able to observe God, then at least God is observing them.

By using the word مُحْسِنِينَ (*muḥsinīn*) for the *muttaqīn* (the pious), light is shed on their inner-self: since these people fully believe in the reward and punishment hence their piety is not merely a display of piety; it has

---

15. Receiving what has been blessed to them by their Lord. Indeed, they had been among the virtuous before.

the spirit of *ihsān* (following everything in the most befitting way) in it. It has been indicated above that only this piety will be of any value before God and it is engendered from a deep grounding in the belief of reward and punishment.

كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ (١٧)<sup>16</sup>

This refers to the sign of their piety and *ihsān*: they sleep very little in the night. In other words, they do not spend the night sleeping in negligence and in indifference; they spend it while preparing for the Day of Accountability: a better part of their night is spent in prostrating and standing before their Lord and in reflection and deliberation.

This verse mentions a necessary effect of being concerned about the Hereafter. People do not go into a deep slumber; they always think that perhaps they are spending their last night in this world; for this reason their sleep is not a deep slumber. They keep getting up in the night to remember their Lord and seek His forgiveness. At another place, such people are referred to in the following words: تَتَجَافَىٰ جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ (١٦:٣٢) (their backs stay away from their beds; they pray to their Lord in fear and hope and spend in the way of God the sustenance We have given them, (32:16)).

This sentence can be parsed in various ways; however, the meaning will be the same in all cases. One option can be: إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَلِيلًا هُجُوعُهُمْ (their sleeping at night would be a little). Another option can be كَانُوا يَهْجَعُونَ قَلِيلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ (little did they sleep at night). In short, as indicated above, there are many ways of grammatically parsing this sentence; however, the meaning is almost the same. Some people have interpreted this verse differently; I am afraid that their view is against linguistic principles as well as against parallel verses of the Qur'ān; hence I will not even bring it into discussion.

The word هُجُوعٌ means to sleep at night and it is evident from this that this is a special feature of the pious and the virtuous that they sleep very less in the night; they spend a better part of it in remembering God, asking for His forgiveness and reflecting on His signs. This is also evident from the parallel verses of the Qur'ān. Thus, for example: يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَرْمِلُ فُؤَادُ اللَّيْلِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (٧٣: ٢-١) (O ye enfolded in the shawl! Stand by night, but a little, (73:1-2)). After this, the amount of time is also specified: نِصْفَهُ أَوْ انْقُصَ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا (٧٣: ٣-٤) (half the night, or even less or a little more, (73:2-4)).

16. They slept but little at night.

It is evident from these details that remaining awake in the night is a special sign of the pious who befittingly worship the Almighty. It can be concluded from this that those who want to attain this status must adopt this practice. For people like us who do not have the strength to adhere to this practice in its ultimate form are provided with certain concessions which will *inshallāh* come into discussion in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Muzzamil.

وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ (١٨)<sup>17</sup>

The time just before day-break is that of dawn. Mentioned here is the objective of their awaking in the night and kneeling and prostrating before God: the last of their tasks would be that they ask for forgiveness in the early hours of dawn; they beseech God to forgive their sins when the Day of Judgement comes and as a result grant them a place in Paradise. It is evident from this that neither they expected that as reward for this practice they would be given a high status by God nor did they go after such a thing; their only desire would be that God forgoes their blemishes and mistakes. Thus their night worship would culminate in imploring the Almighty to pardon them.

It is evident from this discussion that the purpose of worship and serving God in Islam is different from that of other religions. In other religions, its purpose is divine manifestation and witnessing God and His disclosures, amalgamation in His being and other similar things. These are the objectives of the religious practices undertaken by Hindi ascetics and Christian. However, in Islam, the only purpose of worshipping and serving God is to seek His forgiveness and pleasure. If something else assumes the place of their purpose, then it carries no weight. While being influenced by Hindu philosophers, one group of our Sufis has also regarded the objective of worshipping and serving God what has just been indicated above, and for this reason their whole endeavour of self-purification has assumed an entirely different form. Here going into the details of this issue is not possible. I have explained some of its aspects in my book *Tazkiyah-e Nafs* (Purification of the Self).<sup>18</sup>

It is evident both from the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth that the most appropriate time for asking forgiveness from God is the last part of the night and the early hours of dawn. At that time, as is mentioned in a *qudsī* ḥadīth, the mercy of God is waiting for the seekers of forgiveness. However, only the true and earnest seekers have the courage to benefit from this time. Not every slave of his desires has the determination to

17. And in the early hours of dawn sought forgiveness.

18. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tazkiyah nafs*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Lahore: Faran Foundation, 2005.

spend his night kneeling and prostrating before God and then in the early morning implore Him to forgive his sins. The servants of God who show this determination actually by this very attitude show that they are sincere. For this reason, the mercy of God necessarily turns towards them. It is the sincerity of a person which attracts God's mercy. When this is present, then the treasures of God's mercy abound for such a person.

وَفِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ (١٩)<sup>19</sup>

In other words, just as these people (the *muḥsinīn*) befittingly follow God's directives and recognize their obligation towards Him, similarly they are the ones who fully carry out their obligations towards their fellow human beings. They not only acknowledge their own right in their wealth, but also of the deprived and the needy, They discharge this right the way a right should be discharged. They are not in the misconception that they are the sole owners of their wealth: they are fully aware of the fact that if the Almighty has provided them beyond their essential needs, then they have actually been entrusted with wealth that is the right of others. As a result, it must be given to its recipients. If this is not done, then it would be an outright breach and for every breach a person shall be held accountable before God.

The word *مَحْرُوم* (*mahrūm*) refers to every person deprived of wealth; however, it specially refers to those persons who were affluent at some time and were later on deprived of their wealth by some calamity. For such people, the Qur'ān has used the word *غَارِمِينَ* (*ghārimīn*) and they have been included among those to whom charity can be given. Among the deprived, there are many who in spite of being needy feel very embarrassed to ask for their needs. In particular, people who have remained affluent hold their self-esteem very dear to them. Since this word is used in contrast with the word *سَائِل* (those who ask), the indication is clear that it refers to the deprived who do not even ask for their needs. To give due regard to the self-esteem of such people is a big virtue. At another place in the Qur'ān, the affluent are directed to try to reach out to such people and help them. Such people cannot be expected to come to them for their needs. In Sūrah Baqarah, such people are mentioned in the following words:

لِّلْفُقَرَاءِ الَّذِينَ أُحْصِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْأَرْضِ يَحْسَبُهُمُ

19. And in whose wealth the deprived and those who ask had a share.

الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءُ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِلْحَافًا (٢: ٢٧٣)

This charity is for the poor who are stranded in the cause of God and are not able to travel in the land to earn their livelihood. The ignorant take them for men of wealth on account of their modest behaviour. You can recognize them by their faces – they are not annoyingly insistent in begging. (2: 273)

### Section III (Verses 20-23)

The succeeding verses once again take up the central theme of the *sūrah*: reward and punishment. Earlier arguments were only adduced from the effects produced by winds and clouds; here arguments are adduced from the world within man and that outside him which can be found in every nook and corner of this universe. The only condition is that people open their eyes to see them and show conviction in the consequences of what they see.

Readers may now proceed to read these verses:

#### Text and Translation

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ (٢٠) وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ (٢١) وَفِي السَّمَاءِ رِزْقُكُمْ وَمَا تُوعَدُونَ (٢٢) فَوَرَبَّ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌّ مِّثْلَ مَا أَنَّكُمْ تَنْطُقُونَ (٢٣)

And in the earth and yourselves also are signs for those who have conviction. Do you not see? And there is in the heavens your sustenance also and that too about which you are being threatened with. Thus, by the Lord of the heavens and the earth, this is certain to happen like the way you speak. (20-23).

#### Explanation

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ (٢٠)<sup>20</sup>

This verse is connected to the earlier ones which mention the signs of reward and punishment. The signs of the winds and the clouds belong to the ones found between the heavens and the earth. Now, in these succeeding verses, attention is being directed to the signs found in the heavens and the earth and in man himself and starting with the nearest and then going on to the next nearest, first the signs of the earth are alluded to. After that, the signs found within man and then those found in

20. And in the earth are signs for those who have conviction.

the heavens are referred to. Though the Qur'ān has adduced the basic points of its message – monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter – from these signs and details can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*; however, here, keeping in view the central theme of the *sūrah*, only the signs related to the Hereafter and to reward and punishment are alluded to. For this reason, I will confine my discussion to the arguments which substantiate reward and punishment only and just as the Qur'ān has confined itself in this regard to a hint, I too will confine myself to hints since details have already been given in the earlier *sūrahs*.

First, take a look at the following verses of Sūrah Nabā' in which the Qur'ān has adduced arguments from the heavens and the earth and from various objects between them in support of the Hereafter and reward and punishment:

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ مِهَادًا وَالْجِبَالَ أَوْتَادًا وَخَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا  
وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا وَجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا وَبَنَيْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعًا شِدَادًا وَجَعَلْنَا  
سِرَاجًا وَهَّاجًا وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرَاتِ مَاءً ثَجَّاجًا لِنُخْرِجَ بِهِ حَبًّا وَنَبَاتًا وَجَنَّاتٍ  
أَلْفَافًا إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفُصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَاتًا (٧٨: ٦-١٧)

Have We not made the earth a cradle and made the mountains pegs? And not created you in pairs? And not made your sleep a means of comfort? And not made the night a covering and the day a time to earn livelihood? And not built above you seven sturdy skies? And not placed in them a glowing lamp? And not sent down abundant water from dripping clouds so that We may bring forth grain and vegetation and gardens of luxurious growth? Indeed, the Day of Judgement has an appointed time. (78:6-17)

A little deliberation will show that in these verses the Almighty through the multifarious signs of His mercy, power and providence found in the heavens and the earth and the ones found between them has substantiated the fact that this universe has not been created without a purpose; hence it is essential that a day come in which the Creator pass His judgement about the righteous and the wrongdoers. Every aspect of this argument has been explained in the previous *sūrahs*. For this reason, I will briefly allude to some signs of the earth which substantiate reward and punishment:

– Regarding the fact that the Hereafter is indeed possible, the Qur'ān has referred to the signs of the earth by drawing attention to the fact that

people see around them a land which is totally barren and bare; there are absolutely no signs of life or plant-growth in any part of it when suddenly the Almighty sends forth the bursting clouds and just one spell of rain enlivens and luxuriates it. They should reflect that the God Who is continuously showing them this majesty of His power, will not He be able to raise the dead to life again if He intends to?

– The various means and arrangements which the Almighty has made in this earth for the nourishment and sustenance of human beings are referred to and the question posed: Will the God Who has made such arrangements let them go scot-free and not bring a day wherein He calls to account people who used the very favours blessed by Him to rebel against Him, and not reward people who recognized their obligations towards these favours? Do they think that such a wise and noble God is a merry maker before Whom vice and virtue are the same and are they under the self-deception that these countless favours of God impose no responsibility on them?

– The Qur’ān has also directed attention to the signs and remnants of the destruction of previous nations, and has explained that they were destroyed because of their rebelliousness and arrogance against the Almighty. After they were wiped out, God preserved some signs of this demolition so that subsequent nations are afforded with an opportunity to seek the lesson: the God of this universe is not unconcerned about the good and evil which goes on in this world; He is watching all of it. So when the rebelliousness of a nation crosses the limits, it necessarily faces His law of retribution. This established practice of God about nations is a clear evidence on the fact that He will bring forth a day in which His justice will manifest itself totally. The mischievous will be punished for their mischief and the righteous will be rewarded for their righteousness.

Pointed out above are some very prominent signs found in this earth which substantiate reward and punishment. Besides these, there are others as well to which the Qur’ān has directed our attention and I have explained them in this *tafsīr*. Recounting them here will serve to needlessly prolong this explanation.

The word **لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ** implies that there is no dearth of signs found in the earth. They are found at every step. The only thing that a person needs is eyes which can really see, intellect which can reflect and a heart which becomes content on the consequences of reflection and deliberation. In other words, to accept a fact it is not merely enough that arguments are present in its favour; it is also essential that there exist in the addressee the intention to reflect on these arguments and accept their consequences. If a person is devoid of this intention he can find an

excuse to deny the most obvious of realities. In this world, facts were not denied merely because arguments did not exist in their favour or that people who could present them did not exist; in most cases, it was the desire of people who did not want to accept them which because a source for this rejection. No one has a remedy for this malady.

وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ (٢١)<sup>21</sup>

This verse refers to the arguments found within man to substantiate the Day of Judgement. Just as the Qur'ān has presented the world around man to adduce all the basic constituents of its message, it has similarly used the world found within him to adduce them. I have been referring to these at appropriate places in this *tafsīr*. Here I shall briefly allude to some of them which relate to reward and punishment.

– At various places, the Qur'ān has directed our attention to the process of creation: Will the God Who creates a healthy human being and equips him with various abilities both internal and external after He makes a worthless fluid pass through various phases be unable to once again create man after he dies and decay and then take account of all his words and deeds? When creating him the first time was not impossible for Him, how can creating him the second time become impossible for Him? In this regard, it is also indicated that each person everyday observes in himself the phenomena of life, death, *barzakh* and being raised to life after death only if he reflects on these observations and does not let them go by without deliberation.

– The faculties of intellect, understanding and knowledge the Almighty has blessed man with as well as with certain other innate abilities and skills show that man like other creatures of this world is not merely a creature of this world; he has a higher status. He has been entrusted with the freedom to exercise his will in a certain sphere of authority. It is because of this that the Almighty has bestowed on him the status of being his vicegerent. It is an essential requirement of this trust and vicegerency that he one day be brought forth before His Lord so that those who have fulfilled their obligations towards this trust and vicegerency receive its eternal reward and those who adopted a rebellious attitude after being blessed with this trust and vicegerency undergo its punishment. In other words, reward and punishment is an essential requirement of man being installed on the status of vicegerency. This argument is stated in the Qur'ān also and Jesus (sws) too has delineated it in beautiful parables.

---

21. And yourselves also. Do you not see?



– The third important reality which has been specially elaborated upon in Sūrah Qiyāmah is that the Almighty has placed a reproaching soul in man which rebukes him whenever he commits an evil. An oath is sworn in that *sūrah* by the reproaching soul to bear witness to the reward and punishment: had not man's Creator intended to reward piety and punish sin, why would He have placed this reproaching soul in a person which keeps pricking his conscience. Its existence is meant to place on a lesser scale the mechanism of accountability which will one day manifest itself for all mankind so that this keeps reminding a person that the God Who has created him is not unconcerned about the good and evil which emanates from him; on the contrary, He will reward and punish people for such acts. It is as if this miniature court of justice found in every human being is a reminder of that greater court of justice which will be set up on the Day of Judgement. For this very reason a human being is called a miniature world because in him is found a reflection of this whole world.

In Sūrah Qiyāmah, it is stated that each person finds an evidence of reward and punishment in his own self even though he may invent many excuses for it: (١٥-١٤ : ٧٥) بَلِ الْإِنْسَانُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ وَلَوْ أَلْقَى مَعَاذِيرُهُ (in fact, he himself is a witness upon his own-self however much he may put up excuses, (75:14-15)). Similarly, it is also stated in that *sūrah*: بَلْ يُرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ (٧٥:٥) (in fact, man wants to be mischievous before his [conscience], 75:5)). The reason is the same as what I have indicated earlier: a miniature court of justice from God is present in a person's conscience. For this reason, any person who commits a sin does so before this court and this is indeed open audaciousness on his part.

Here it needs to be kept in consideration that a person's reproaching soul will continue with its task of alerting him as long as a person does not kill it by defying its calls. I have delineated this practice of the Almighty at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*.

Since a person's soul is the closest to him, the words say that why is it that he is not being able to see such near at hand signs. Though the boundaries of the earth are beyond him and so are the heavens, is his soul also beyond his reach that he is unable to peep into it and observe its signs?

وَفِي السَّمَاءِ رِزْقُكُمْ وَمَا تُوعَدُونَ (٢٢)<sup>22</sup>

No attention is directed at the signs found in the sky: within it is their

---

22. And there is in the heavens your sustenance also and that too about which you are being threatened with.

sustenance as well as the punishment they are being threatened with. By sustenance here is meant rain which becomes a source of sustenance. It is very common in Arabic to state the effect while referring to its cause. The words وَمَا تُوعَدُونَ, as alluded to earlier, refer to the punishment with which people were threatened with if they denied the Prophet (sws). Examples of such a punishment are found in history, and some of them will be referred to further ahead in the *sūrah*.

The implication of the verse is that every now and then the sky bears witness to reward and punishment. From it, the Almighty rains down their sustenance and from it He also unleashed His punishment for those who are rebellious and disobedient. He does not need to make any extra effort to shower His mercy nor any extra effort to let loose His torment. So if they are continuously witnessing this majesty and grandeur from Him, why do they think that it is not possible for Him to make the very source of life for them into a means of their destruction if He intends so. Moreover, after observing this majesty and grandeur of His, why do not they believe that He is unconcerned or unbiased about the good and evil which is taking place around them. The fact of the matter is that He will necessarily punish the evil-doers and reward the righteous.

فَوَرَبِّ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌّ مِثْلَ مَا أَنَّكُمْ تَنطِفُونَ (٢٣)<sup>23</sup>

This verse refers to all the signs and an oath is sworn by the Lord of the sky and the earth on the fact that the Day of Judgement they are being reminded of and the consequences of the rejection of the Prophet (sws) they are being threatened with are certain to happen. It would not be difficult at all for God to do this. Just as it is very easy for a person to utter a word from his tongue, similarly, it is very for God to bring about all this. All He needs to do it is to say “let it be”.

The antecedent of the pronoun in إِنَّهُ is the complement of oath which was stated earlier viz: إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَصَادِقٌ وَإِنَّ الدِّينَ لَوَاقِعٌ (٥-٦). Since this has already been mentioned, a pronoun was enough to refer to it.

At first, after referring to the signs found in the earth and the sky an oath is sworn by them and then the same is repeated by swearing by the Lord of the sky and the earth. It is evident from this style that just as a creation reflects the temperament of its creator, in a similar manner, the signs of the sky and the earth throw light on the attributes of God viz: He will reward and punish people. Had this not been the case, why would this become evident from the sky and the earth He has created?

---

23. Thus, by the Lord of the heavens and the earth, this is certain to happen the way you speak.

The word **حَقٌّ** in **إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌّ مِّثْلَ مَا أَنَّكُمْ تَنْطُقُونَ** refers to two meanings at the same time: firstly, reward and punishment is a reality in which there is no element of any doubt; secondly, it is certain to happen and no one should regard it improbable as far as its happening is concerned. When the time of its advent arrives, the Almighty will unveil it in the blink of an eye. That it is a reality has become evident from the arguments stated above. Here its happening is explained through a parable: bringing it about is not the least of a bother for the Lord of the heavens and the earth. When He had no difficulty in creating them the first time why would it be difficult for Him to recreate people to hold them accountable for their deeds? Just as it is easy for a person to utter a word, in a similar way, it is easy for God to accomplish the greatest of tasks. He does not have to make preparations or arrange for the means to do a task. He does every task in the blink of an eye by merely uttering the word *kun* (be). This subject is discussed at various places in the Qurʾān:

إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَاهُ أَنْ نَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ (١٦:٤٠)

When We intend to do a thing, We need only say: “Be,” and it is. (16:40)

At another place, the words are:

أَوَلَيْسَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَى أَنْ يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ بَلَىٰ وَهُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ (٣٦:٨٠-٨٢)

Has He who created the heavens and earth no power to create like them? Yes! He surely is. He is the all-knowing and the Creator of all. Such is the matter of His power that when He decides to undertake a task, He says: “Be,” and it is done. (36:80-81)

At some places, it is also said that recreating this world is easier for God than creating it for the first time:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ وَهُوَ أَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ (٣٠:٢٧)

And He it is Who begins Creation; then He will do it again and this is even more easier for Him. (30:27)

It should remain in consideration that this parable is merely meant to make us understand. For in reality, it is much easier for the Almighty to

create the whole universe than it is for us to even utter a word. We need a number of means and systems given to us by God to utter a word. On the contrary, God needs none of these. Similarly, at some places the words *كَلِمَاجٍ بِالْبَصَرِ* (in the blink of an eye) are used in the Qur'ān as in: وَمَا أَمْرُنَا إِلَّا وَاحِدَةٌ كَلِمَاجٍ بِالْبَصَرِ (٥٠: ٥٤) (and Our directive will be fulfilled in the blink of an eye, (54:50)). This too is a parable which informs us about His absolute authority. About such parables and similes, readers must always keep in mind what is mentioned in Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān.<sup>24</sup>

Here an important point mentioned by my mentor Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī is worthy of consideration. While delineating the sequence and mutual relationship between the signs of the earth, sky and the world within man, he writes:<sup>25</sup>

The beautiful sequence found in this comprehensive discourse and the principle of “the nearest to the next nearest” found in it become very evident from the earlier discussion. However, a further deliberation will reveal another subtle point.

In this paragraph, first the earth is mentioned from the words وَمَا تُوعَدُونَ to وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ. After that, man himself is referred to and then the sky. A little reflection shows that man lies between the earth and the sky and has two aspects: material and spiritual. From one of these, he is inclined towards the earth and from the other towards the sky. After that, the signs found in all three of them are alluded to. Then the words فَوَرَبَّ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ (thus, by the Lord of the

---

24. Reference is to the following verses:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ (٧:٣)

It is He who has revealed to you the Book. Some of its verses are *muḥkam* – they are the foundation of the Book – and others *mutashābih*. Then those whose hearts are warped go after the *mutashābih* among them in order to create dissension and in order to know their reality even though no one except God knows their reality. And those who are well-grounded in knowledge say: “We believe in them: all this has come from our Lord.” And only men of understanding take heed from them. (3:7)

---

25. Farāhī, *Majmū'ah Tafāsīr*, 119.

heavens and the earth, this is certain) unveil a comprehensive argument which is the real argument which substantiates man being raised up again and reward and punishment. This argument is then further strengthened by the parable of *مِثْلَ مَا أَنْتُمْ تَنْطِقُونَ* (the way you speak) and this parable itself emanates from man who is a small world in himself and as such a mirror to all sky and the earth and this is if the earlier verse *وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ* is referred to.

### Section III: Verses (24-46)

In the succeeding verses, the Qur'ān has presented historical evidence on the claims that are mentioned earlier. This is a very common stylistic feature of the Qur'ān that besides drawing testimonies from the world found within man and from his intellect, it also presents testimonies from history. The purpose is to explain everything fully before the addressees, and if there is even a slight chance that hearts of people can be influenced, then they are given the opportunity to learn a lesson.

A little deliberation on these incidents shows that there are three aspects which are kept in consideration in them:

Firstly, winds and clouds had a special role in the destruction of nations mentioned here. View thus, these incidents are a substantiation of the oaths sworn above.

Secondly, both aspects of the result are evident in these incidents: mercy as well as wrath. The same thing which at the behest of the Almighty became a means of protection for one nation became a means of punishment for another.

Thirdly, God's power is immense. However much a nation be powerful but when God intends to destroy it, He can do so in the blink of any eye.

In the light of this background, readers may proceed to read the verses given below:

#### Text and Translation

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ (٢٤) إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَامٌ قَوْمٌ مُنْكَرُونَ (٢٥) فَرَاغَ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ فَجَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ سَمِينٍ (٢٦) فَقَرَّبَهُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٢٧) فَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَحْزَنْ وَبَشِّرْهُ بِغُلَامٍ عَلِيمٍ (٢٨) فَأَقْبَلَتِ امْرَأَتُهُ فِي صَرَّةٍ فَصَكَّتْ وَجْهَهَا وَقَالَتْ عَجُوزٌ عَقِيمٌ (٢٩) قَالُوا كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْعَلِيمُ (٣٠) قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ أَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ (٣١) قَالُوا إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى قَوْمٍ مُجْرِمِينَ

(٣٢) لِنُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّن طِينٍ (٣٣) مُسَوَّمَةً عِندَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُسْرِفِينَ (٣٤) فَأَخْرَجْنَا مَن كَانَ فِيهَا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٣٥) فَمَا وَجَدْنَا فِيهَا غَيْرَ بَيْتٍ مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (٣٦) وَتَرَكْنَا فِيهَا آيَةً لِلَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ (٣٧) وَفِي مُوسَى إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (٣٨) فَتَوَلَّىٰ بِرُكْبِهِ وَقَالَ سَاحِرٌ أَوْ مَجْنُونٌ (٣٩) فَأَخَذْنَاهُ وَجُنُودَهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ (٤٠) وَفِي عَادٍ إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّيحَ الْعَقِيمَ (٤١) مَا تَدْرُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَتَتْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ كَالرَّمِيمِ (٤٢) وَفِي ثَمُودَ إِذْ قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَمَتَّعُوا حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ (٤٣) فَعَتَوْا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ (٤٤) فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا مِنْ قِيَامٍ وَمَا كَانُوا مُنْتَصِرِينَ (٤٥) وَقَوْمُ نُوحٍ مِّن قَبْلُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ (٤٦)

Has the tale of the honoured guests of Abraham reached you? When they came to him, they said: "Peace be on you!" "Peace be on you too," he answered, [and thought] these folks seem to be strangers. He then hastened secretly to his family and brought for them some roasted meat of a fatted calf and placed it before them. Then he said: "Why are you people not eating?" So he felt a kind of fear from them. "Fear not," said they to him and gave him glad tidings of a son blessed with knowledge. Then his wife, bewildered, came forward, smote her forehead, and cried: "Will now a barren old woman produce a child?" "Thus says your Lord," they replied. He is All-Wise and All-Knowing. He asked: "O Messengers! What at present is your mission?" They replied: "We have been sent to a sinful people so that we may hurl upon them stones of clay, marked by your Lord for those who exceed the limits. Then We evacuated from therein all the believers and found there but one house of those who were Muslims, and We left in it a great sign for those who fear a grievous penalty. (24-37)

And in the tale of Moses also is a sign when We sent him forth to Pharaoh with an authority manifest; so he turned his back in arrogance his might and cried: "He is a sorcerer or one possessed." We then seized him and his forces, and threw them into the sea, and for this, he himself was worthy of blame. (38-40)

And in the tale of the 'Ād too there is a sign, when We unleashed on them a devastating dry wind; it reduced to powder everything over which it swept. (41-42)

And in the tale of the Thamūd also there is a lesson when it was said to them: "Enjoy yourselves for a while." So they rebelliously defied the command of their Lord and they were struck by a thunder bolt whilst

they looked on. Then they were neither able to get up nor could they save themselves. (43-45)

And before this, We seized the folks of Noah too. They were also a disobedient people. (46)

### Explanation

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ (٢٤)<sup>26</sup>

Under an earlier verse: وَفِي السَّمَاءِ رِزْقُكُمْ وَمَا تُوعَدُونَ, I have indicated that mercy and torment both are in the authority of God. He can make a thing a mercy for whomsoever He intends and make the same thing a torment for whomsoever He intends. Rain falling from the heavens is a great mercy of the Almighty; however, whenever God wants, He can make it a punishment.

To delineate this reality, in the succeeding verses, historical episodes are cited beginning with those of Abraham (sws) and Lot (sws). In them, before depicting the fate of the people of Lot (sws), it is shown that the very angels who brought God's wrath on them had earlier gone to Abraham (sws) to give him glad tidings of a knowledgeable son.

It is not necessary that the address هَلْ أَتَاكَ be directed at the Prophet (sws); in fact, it is more probable that it be directed to the rejecters which are being conclusively conveyed the truth in this *sūrah*. When a group is addressed in the singular, the purpose, as has been explained at a number of places in this *tafsīr*, is to focus the attention of each member of the group individually. The interrogative style adopted in itself shows that what is being said is of importance; everyone should intently hear it out.

The word ضَيْفٌ is used for both singular and plural entities. Thus here it is qualified by the adjective مُكْرَمِينَ. This word refers to the hospitality, warmth and kindness shown by Abraham (sws) as well as the elaborate arrangements made by him in dealing with his guests. This attitude of Abraham (sws) bears witness to the fact that the decency and civility of the guests was reflected from their faces. It did not needed to be divulged. Thus, in spite of not knowing them, Abraham (sws) set about to welcome them in a befitting manner and with great urgency prepared what best he could have to serve them as a meal. However, when these very guests reached Lot (sws), his nation showed great indecency to them and in order to save their honour, Lot (sws) himself had to put his own honour at stake. At last, these guests had to unveil their reality before these wretched people and became instrumental in destroying the

---

26. Has the tale of the honoured guests of Abraham reached you?

whole nation.

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَامٌ قَوْمٌ مُنْكَرُونَ (٢٥)<sup>27</sup>

The implication of the verse is that these guests paid their salutations to Abraham (sws) the way righteous people do and Abraham (sws) too replied to them. These salutations to some extent dispelled them as strangers before Abraham (sws) and he was assured that they are decent and virtuous guests. However, the question of their identity, their origin and purpose of visit did arise in his mind, for to him they were complete strangers.

The words قَوْمٌ مُنْكَرُونَ were uttered in his heart and not by his tongue. The reason that this question arose in his mind must have been that in the first place they were very few righteous people in that area and whoever such people were there were associated and linked closely to Abraham (sws). For this reason, he expressed wonder that in this age when decent people are found few and far between, where did such civilized and upright people come from.

It needs to be kept in consideration that just as the word قَالَ denotes what is said by the tongue, it also denotes what is said in the heart. Examples of this usage are found in classical Arabic poetry as well as in the Qur'ān itself – some of which can be seen in the preceding *sūrahs* and some others in the succeeding ones. He responded to the salutations of the guests by the tongue; however, what is stated here in this part of the verse was said by him in his heart because this is something which is not appropriate for uttering by the tongue.

فَرَاغَ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ فَجَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ سَمِينٍ (٢٦)<sup>28</sup>

The word رَوَّغ means to do something secretly and furtively. As soon as Abraham (sws) saw his guests, he furtively crept to his house so that he could arrange something to eat for them. This was done furtively by him so that it would not be a burden on the guests. This is what hosts who are noble and generous do: they are hospitable to their guests such that the guests do not feel uncomfortable.

The words سَمِينٍ بِعِجْلٍ فَجَاءَ refer to the fact that Abraham (sws) slaughtered a fat calf and presented its cooked meat for consumption

27. When they came to him, they said: "Peace be on you!" "Peace be on you too," he answered, [and thought] these folks seem to be strangers.

28. He then hastened secretly to his family and brought for them some roasted meat of a fatted calf.



before his guests. The words عَجَلَ سَمِين express the generosity of Abraham (sws): he slaughtered a whole calf for his guests. This does not necessarily imply that he presented all the meat before them. At times, a part is signified by stating the whole. Just as this style exists in every language, it also exists in Arabic.

<sup>29</sup> فَقَرَّبَهُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٢٧)

Certain words towards which concomitant factors point are suppressed in this sentence. The whole discourse is something to the effect: the guests were presented with a sumptuous meal; however, when he saw that the guests were not consuming it, he very affectionately asked them to eat it. At some other instances, the Qur'ān has revealed this suppression.

<sup>30</sup> فَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَحْزَنْ وَبَشِّرْهُ بِغُلَامٍ عَالِمٍ (٢٨)

When the guests did not eat the meal presented to them, this naturally increased in the mind of Abraham (sws) the alien element he had initially felt from them. He felt fear in his heart. It is hinted in Sūrah Hūd that this fear was caused because his guests had refrained from eating: فَلَمَّا رَأَى أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَأْكُلُونَ قَالَ تَبَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ آلِهَةً لَكُمْ سَعًى (١١:٢٠) (but when he saw their hands being withheld from food, he thought of them as strangers and was afraid of them in his heart, (11:70)).

It seems as if Abraham (sws) was alarmed at this attitude from his guests that they were not human beings the way people have thought; they are in fact angels. It is commonly known that angels do not eat – something which could not have been unknown to as celebrated a prophet as Abraham (sws). It would also have been in his knowledge that when angels come, they have some important errand before them. Moreover, the moral anarchy of the people of Lot (sws) had reached its pinnacle in a nearby land as a result of which it was continuously under the threat of divine punishment. In these circumstances, it was not improbable at all that Abraham (sws) feared that their time had come. His hesitancy was detected by the angels and they assured him to remain calm and in order to comfort him further gave him glad tidings of a knowledgeable son. This was great news for it was not merely news of a

29. And placed it before them. Then he said: “Why are you people not eating?”

30. So he felt a kind of fear from them. “Fear not,” said they to him and gave him glad tidings of a son blessed with knowledge.

son; it was news of a knowledgeable son. Hidden in these words were the glad tidings that the son would be a prophet. After receiving this news, Abraham (sws) felt assured regarding his own self; however, he still had a question in mind as regards the campaign at hand of the angels. This he expressed later; details will shortly follow.

فَأَقْبَلَتْ امْرَأَتُهُ فِي صَرَّةٍ فَصَكَّتْ وَجْهَهَا وَقَالَتْ عَجُوزٌ عَقِيمٌ (٢٩)<sup>31</sup>

The glad tidings mentioned above were given to Abraham in a loud voice; for this reason, his wife Sarah who was standing nearby was able to hear them. Who can imagine the amount of her happiness and amazement. Thus as she soon as heard them, she expressed wonder in a typical lady-like style by striking her forehead and said that she was a barren old lady and how could she give birth to a child in this age and situation. The extent of amazement, elation and further substantiation of these glad tidings reflected in each and every word of Sara sentence requires no explanation.

The word *صَرَّةٍ* refers to the fact that she came forward in a state of astonishment and wonder. There is an Arabic idiom *صَرَ الْفَرَسُ أُذُنَيْهِ* which means that the horse raised his ears.<sup>32</sup> From this very idiom has sprung another idiom *فِي صَرَّةٍ* which is used to express surprise and incredulity.<sup>33</sup>

The words *فَصَكَّتْ وَجْهَهَا* refer to the fact that she struck her forehead. This is a very typical way adopted by women to express wonder. Their utter surprise is often shown by saying something while striking their forehead. In these two words, the Qur'ān has portrayed her complete state of astonishment.

قَالُوا كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْعَلِيمُ (٣٠)<sup>34</sup>

The angels replied that she should rest assured for thus has his Lord bidden, and when He has bade something, it shall necessarily be fulfilled; neither her state of being a barren old lady will be any cause of hindrance nor her husband's old age. God is all-knowing and all-wise. His knowledge and wisdom is all-embracing. All means have been created by Him and are subservient to Him; whenever He wants, He will use them for His purpose.

31. Then his wife, bewildered, came forward, smote her forehead, and cried: "Will now a barren old woman produce a child?"

32. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 4, 452.

33. Ibid., vol. 4, 451.

34. "Thus says your Lord," they replied. He is All-Wise and All-Knowing.

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ أَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ (٣١)<sup>35</sup>

When Abraham (sws) became assured about himself and also came to know that his guests were in fact angels, he inquired from them about their immediate assignment. He posed this question to them because, as indicated earlier, he was ware of the fact that when angels come in this manner, they have some big mission before them. If the issue was mere communication of glad tidings of a son, it would not have required this elaborate arrangement. The word *خَطْبُ* is used in Arabic only for some big and important matter. Since Abraham (sws) already had some fear regarding the people of Lot (sws), he wanted to find out if this was their mission. In particular, he was very concerned about what would happen to Lot (sws), his family and his companions. Thus, at another instance in the Qur'ān, it is stated that when it became evident to Abraham (sws) that a decision had been made to punish the people of Lot (sws), he argued with God about the believers among them. God has praised this argument and has presented it as a testimony of the sympathy and concern found in him.

قَالُوا إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِينَ (٣٢)<sup>36</sup>

The angels replied that they had been sent to nation of sinners. Here it seems that they did not name the people of Lot; however, the words in Sūrah Hūd are: (٧٠:١١) قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى قَوْمٍ لُّوطٍ (they said: “have no fear; we are sent forth to the people of Lot,” (11:70)). By reading both these verses together, one can conclude that the angels mentioned them both by their character and by their name. This was because it becomes evident to Abraham (sws) that the people of Lot (sws) had become worthy of punishment but the Qur'ān, on account of eloquence, has suppressed their name and only referred to them as a nation of sinners. The reason is that it becomes evident that the punishment with which the nation of Lot (sws) faced was because of their own deeds. It needs to be kept in consideration that this is the central theme of the *sūrah* as well.

لُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةٌ مِّن طِينٍ (٣٣) مُّسَوَّمَةٌ عِندَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُسْرِفِينَ (٣٤)<sup>37</sup>

The angels express in these verses the purpose of their advent: to shower pebbles on these sinners. The preposition *عَلَى* here is testimony to

35. He asked: “O Messengers! What at present is your mission?”

36. They replied: “We have been sent to a sinful people.

37. So that we may hurl upon them stones of clay, marked by your Lord for those who exceed the limits.

the fact that such will be this onslaught that it will completely rout them.

The words *حِجَارَةً مِّنْ طِينٍ* refer to the pebbles which become stones of mud. The Qur'ān has also used the word *سَجِيلٍ* for it. Thus the words in Sūrah Hūd are: *وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سَجِيلٍ مَّنْضُودٍ* (82:11) (and We let loose upon it a shower of clay-stone, (11:82)). The word *سَجِيلٍ* is actually an arabacized form of the Persian word *سَجِيل*. Here the words *حِجَارَةً مِّنْ طِينٍ* explain their composition.

The word *مُسَوَّمَةً* means “marked”. It is an accusative of state from *سَوَمَ*. In other words, as per the scheme of God, these stones had been marked for the purpose of being used solely for the mischievous elements of the people of Lot (sws). Today wherever roads are built from pebbles, one can see the workmen stacking bricks and marking them which means that they belong to the state. In other words, no one should be misled by that fact that how can so many pebbles be arranged which destroy a whole nation. They have been piled up and also bear divinely marked signs showing that they have a specific purpose and that no other person should touch them. In Sūrah Hūd, it is further pointed out: *وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ بِبَعِيدٍ* (83:11) (and these stones are not far off from these unjust people, (11:83)) This indicates the fact that from the very earth they roam about, in fact from below their very feet a divinely assigned wind will pick them up and shower them on these people.

The word *لِلْمُتَسْرِفِينَ* refers to the miscreants among the nation of Lot (sws). The word *إِسْرَافٍ* means to exceed the bounds set by God. It has been used in the Qur'ān for both small and big excesses. Here it refers to the indecent behaviour of the nation of Lot (sws) with which it was afflicted as a nation. A nation which openly and blatantly violates the bounds set by God faces any of the elements which have been put to their service by God; He unleashes these elements which then rout and ravage these people because of their rebelliousness.

فَأَخْرَجْنَا مَن كَانَ فِيهَا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٣٥) فَمَا وَجَدْنَا فِيهَا غَيْرَ بَيْتٍ مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ  
(٣٦) وَتَرَكْنَا فِيهَا آيَةً لِلَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ (٣٧)<sup>38</sup>

The conversation of the angels ended in the previous verse. From here God resumes His narration of the rest of the anecdote beginning with what He did with them after that: before sending punishment to them, He evacuated all the believers from it. The antecedent of the pronoun in *فِيهَا*

38. Then We evacuated from therein all the believers and found there but one house of those who were Muslims, and We left in it a great sign for those who fear a grievous penalty.

is the land of the people of Lot. Since all these examples are being cited under *وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ* the pronoun has come without an antecedent. Such an occurrence of a pronoun in the presence of some contextual indication is very common in Arabic. Several examples can be seen of this usage in previous *sūrahs*.

God has mentioned in these verses an established practice of His which has been referred to several times in this *tafsīr*: when decisive punishment is meted out to a nation to which the truth has been conclusively been delivered by a messenger of God, those who have professed faith in the messenger before the advent of this punishment are saved. This established practice of God has been explained in the accounts of the messengers. About the people of Lot (sws), it is mentioned at one instance that he, his family and his followers were directed to leave the place destined for punishment before dawn, and leave it in a manner that they should not even look back.

The verse *فَمَا وَجَدْنَا فِيهَا غَيْرَ بَيْتٍ مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ* refers to the fact that in that area except for one family, there was no other house of Muslims. Obviously, this family belonged to Lot (sws) and in it too, as the Qur'ān has specified, his wife had been isolated because all her sympathies instead of being with Lot (sws) were with his nation.

By this special reference of the Qur'ān to this lack of existence of believers among the nation of Lot (sws), it becomes evident that the Almighty does not send His decisive punishment on a nation unless the whole of a nation has become morally corrupt. Believers either become non-existent among it or are in such small numbers that they can be regarded as virtually non-existent. The argument of Abraham (sws) with God as recorded in the Qur'ān also points to this and the attributes of mercy and justice of God also entail it.

Here, a special aspect needs to be considered: the above verse mentions the word *مُؤْمِنِينَ* (believers) and the current one mentions the word *مُسْلِمِينَ* (Muslims). The reason for this is that the previous verse mentions the practice of God regarding salvation from divine punishment, and as per this practice, only true believers are protected from such punishment. In the verse under discussion, it is stated that except for one family there was no other Muslim family in that area. The word *الْمُسْلِمِينَ* used for this family has a lot of scope in it. It can cover the weak in faith and the strong in faith as well as the mature and the immature. So much so, in the apparent sense, even the wife of the Prophet Lot (sws) was included in it but was excluded from it when the final time arrived.

The verse *وَتَرَكْنَا فِيهَا آيَةً لِلَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ* refers to the fact that the Almighty left an obvious and exemplary sign in the city of the nation of

Lot (sws) for people who want to witness the signs of wrath of God in this earth and want to seek a lesson from it. Here readers may once again refresh the following earlier verse in their minds: *وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ* (and in the earth and yourselves also are signs for those who have conviction, (20)). The verse under discussion presents a testimony of what is claimed in verse 20. I have already explained in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Hījr that Sodom and Gomorrah which were the settlements of the nation of Lot were situated on the route between Hījāz and Syria. Trade caravans of the Quraysh often passed on this route. The implication is that if even after witnessing these signs and remnants they are rejecting the warnings of the Prophet it only means that these people will profess faith when the promised calamity will waylay them.

Here, a brief explanation of the nature of the pebble-hurling storm referred to in verse thirty three is in order. This will elucidate that the relationship between the oaths sworn at the beginning of the *sūrah* by dust-laden wind and by striped clouds and between this tale becomes evident.

My mentor Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī has dealt in detail with the nature of this punishment in this *tafsīr* of Sūrah Dhāriyāt. He himself has summed it up later as well in the following words:

The Almighty unleashed a dust-laden storm on the people of Lot (sws) which finally took the shape of a stone hurling wind. This at first rained down pebbles and stones on them and later when the storm picked up, it destroyed all the houses. While referring to the people of Lot (sws), it is stated: *فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا* (on some We sent down a violent stone-hurling wind, (29:40)). At another instance the words used about them are: *فَجَعَلْنَا غَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيلٍ* (We razed their city to the ground and let loose a shower of clay-stones upon them, (15:74)). In other words, such was the nature of this strong wind that the houses and roofs were razed to ground and the pebbles and stones completely covered them. At another place, the words are: *وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ أَهْوَىٰ فَغَشَّاهَا مَا غَشَّى* (and overthrew the overthrown cities; thus there covered them that which did cover them, (53:53-54)).<sup>39</sup>

In the end, after critiquing the statement of the Torah regarding the punishment meted out to the People of Lot (sws), he has summarized the whole discussion in the following words:

---

39. Farāhī, *Majmū‘ah Tafāsīr*, 129.

It is evident from this that the Almighty sent upon them the punishment of a stone-hurling windstorm which covered them as well as their dwellings. If the statement of the Torah in this regard is also accepted, then it will become further evident that besides this stone-hurling windstorm, they also faced the punishment of lightning and thunder.<sup>40</sup>

In the light of these details, it can be seen that in the tale of Lot's people both types of testimonies are present to which the oaths stated earlier in the *sūrah* allude; in other words, the effects of the dust-laden wind as well as the striped winter clouds both played their role.

The incident of the people of Lot is also mentioned in Sūrah Hūd and Sūrah Hījr. For more details, they can be consulted. Inshallāh every aspect shall become evident.

وَفِي مُوسَى إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (٣٨)<sup>41</sup>

This verse is actually connected to the account of Abraham (sws). In other words, just as there are signs of God's help and His justice and revenge in the account of Abraham (sws), these signs are also present in the account of Moses (sws).

Research on the word سُلْطَانٌ has already been presented at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*. It is used in the meaning of “a clear sanction” as well as of “awe and respect”. Here, it is used in both these meanings. The signs shown by Moses (sws) were sanctioned by God; The Pharaoh merely because of his arrogance regarded them to be magic even though he knew that they were miracles from God. It is for this very reason that after witnessing them, the Pharaoh and his followers were so awe-inspired by Moses (sws) that in spite of their frenzy for revenge they, till the very end, did not dare to harm him.

فَتَوَلَّىٰ بُرْكُنَيْهِ وَقَالَ سَاحِرٌ أَوْ مَجْنُونٌ (٣٩)<sup>42</sup>

The word رُكْنٌ means “shoulder” and the letter ب transforms the verb into a transitive one. When a person evades someone because of arrogance, he turns his face by jerking his shoulder. Thus this expression would mean that “he turned his face in arrogance”. This style is found in

40. Ibid., 131.

41. And in the tale of Moses also is a sign when We sent him forth to Pharaoh with an authority manifest.

42. So he turned his back in arrogance and cried: “He is a sorcerer or one possessed.”

the Qur'ān at various places. For example:

وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَتَأَىٰ بِجَانِبِهِ (٨٣:١٧)

When We bestow favours on man, he starts to evade and turns his head in arrogance. (17:83)

In Sūrah Hajj, 22:9 this arrogant evasion is termed as: ثَائِي عَظْفِهِ (٩:٢٢) (turn away in scorn, (22:9)).

The words وَقَالَ سَاحِرٌ أَوْ مُجُنُّونٌ indicate that at times, Moses (sws) was regarded as a magician and at times a madman: when they saw his miracles, they called him a magician and when they heard his calls to faith, they dubbed him a mad person for he was claiming himself to be a Messenger of a God he had never seen.

فَأَخَذْنَاهُ وَجُنُودَهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ (٤٠)<sup>43</sup>

At that very time, God seized him and his armies and threw them in the sea. Armies are mentioned here to point to the reason of his arrogance. It was his reliance and trust on them that made him haughty. The details of the way in which the Pharaoh and his armies were drowned have already been mentioned in previous *sūrahs*. Here, in this verse, the way their fate is described shows that their status was no more than that of a handful of dust or ashes; so the Almighty got hold of it and strewed it in the sea. This is a portrayal of the extreme and boundless power of the Almighty that the greatest manifestation of arrogance of an arrogant person is no more than a handful of hay.

The words وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ refer to the fact that the Pharaoh himself was to blame for this fate; no other person was responsible for it. The Almighty fully informed him of good and evil through His messenger but arrogance had got the better of his senses and intellect so much that he never got ready to reflect on this and he led his whole nation to ruin.

Here, the details of destruction through drowning of the Pharaoh and his armies are not mentioned; however, it is evident from other verses of the Qur'ān and from the Torah that it too was because of wind. My mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī after dwelling in detail on the whole incident has summarized the whole discussion in the following words:

The strange manifestations of winds which came into play with regard to this incident to which the Qur'ān has made a passing

---

43. We then seized him and his forces, and threw them into the sea, and for this, he himself was worthy of blame.



reference is alluded to in the Torah in the following words:

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided. (Exodus 14:21)

This eastern storm blew all night and ceased in the morning. Wind pressure forced water into Suez canal in the west leaving the eastern canal – the ‘Aqabah canal dry. When the storm ceased, water spread at its place and the army which was chasing Moses (sws) was drowned. This is indicated by the Qur’ān as well. It is mentioned in Sūrah Dukhān:

فَأَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي لَيْلًا إِنَّكُمْ مُتَّبِعُونَ وَاتْرُكِ الْبَحْرَ رَهْوًا إِنَّهُمْ جُنْدٌ مُغْرَقُونَ (٢٤-٤٣:٢٣)

And take with you My servants by night and be informed that shall be pursued. And leave still the sea. Indeed, they are an army to be drowned. (44:23-24)

The word رهو means “still and calm” and obviously a sea can be calm when the wind becomes calm. In Sūrah Tāha, the words are:

وَلَقَدْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي فَاصْرِبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيقًا فِي الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا لَا تَخَافُ دَرَكًا وَلَا تَخْشَىٰ فَاتَّبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ بِجُنُودِهِ فَغَشِيَهُمْ مِنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمْ (٧٨-٧٧:٢٠)

Then We directed Moses saying: “Take with you My servants in the night and strike for them a dry path across the sea. Neither will you have fear of being overtaken nor any worry of drowning.” So the Pharaoh went in their pursuit with his armies, but covered them from the sea that which covered them. (20:77-78)

In Exodus the song of the praise is recorded thus:

But you blew with your breath, and the sea covered them. They sank like lead, in the mighty waters. (15:10)

In Deuteronomy, the words are:

what he did to the Egyptian army, to its horses and chariots, how he overwhelmed them with the waters of the Red Sea as they were pursuing you, and how the LORD brought lasting ruin on them. (11:4)

The summary of all these details is that the Almighty saved Moses (sws) by a strong wind and destroyed the Pharaoh and his armies through a soft wind; in other words, mercy and punishment of God both manifested themselves through the effects of the wind.<sup>44</sup>

The anecdote of Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh is a very prominent example of the reward and punishment to which the testimony of the winds was presented in the beginning of the *sūrah*. It also is among the signs referred to by the verse: *وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِّلْمُوقِنِينَ* (٢٠) (and in the earth and yourselves also are signs for those who have conviction, (20)).

وَفِي عَادٍ إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّيحَ الْعَقِيمَ (٤١)<sup>45</sup>

The fate of the people of ‘Ād is alluded to: for those who can seek a lesson, there is a lot that can be gauged from their account when the Almighty unleashed on them a barren wind. The expression *الرِّيحَ الْعَقِيمَ* refers to a wind which produces no benefits neither rain nor any other. In Arabic, winds which produce rain are called *لَوَاقِح* (those which bear benefit), and those which produce no benefit are called *عَقِيمَ* (barren) as in: *فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِم رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِي أَيَّامٍ نَّحْسَاتٍ* (١٦:٤١) (So, over a few ill-omened days We let loose on them a howling gale, (41:16)).

مَا تَذَرُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَتَتْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا جَعَلَتْهُ كَالرَّمِيمِ (٤٢)<sup>46</sup>

This verse portrays the destruction caused by this wind. It crushed everything it passed by to bits. The word *رَمِيم* refers to decomposed pieces and fragments of bones, ropes and wood. Cold wind because of its low temperature and dryness strips things of their vigour, freshness and life. And if such a wind is strong also, then it crushes to bits and pieces crops, vegetation and all other life-forms. At another place in the Qur’ān, these details are stated thus: *إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِم رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِي يَوْمٍ نَّحْسٍ مُّسْتَمِرٍّ تَنْزِعُ النَّاسَ كَأَنَّهُمْ أُعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ مُّنْقَعِرٍ* (٥٤: ١٩-٢٠) (We let loose on them a stormy wind at a perpetual time of bad omen which plucked out people as if they were uprooted trunks of palm-trees, (54:19-20)).

وَفِي ثَمُودَ إِذْ قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَمَتَّعُوا حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ (٤٣) فَعَتَوْا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ

44. Farāhī, *Majmū‘ah Tafāsīr*, 131-132.

45. And in the tale of the ‘Ād too there is a sign, when We unleashed on them a devastating dry wind;

46. It reduced to powder everything over which it swept.

وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ (٤٤)<sup>47</sup>

After the ‘Ād, a reminder is sounded of the fate met by the Thamūd. In their account too, there is a lot from which people who want to seek a lesson can do so. The words *إِذْ قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَمَتَّعُوا حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ* specifically refer to the time when their rebellious leader had hamstrung the she-camel and their prophet Ṣāliḥ had sounded a final warning to them that they now have very little time to enjoy the luxuries of life for their doom was at hand. What is stated here concisely in the words *حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ* is elaborated upon in Sūrah Hūd in the following words: *فَعَقَرُوهَا فَقَالَ تَمَتَّعُوا فِي دَارِكُمْ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ ذَٰلِكَ وَعَدٌ غَيْرُ مَكْذُوبٍ* (yet they slew her; so he said: “you have but three days to your ease in your dwellings; this threat shall not prove false.” (11:65)). It is evident from this verse that even after the final warning when they had killed the she-camel, they were given a further respite of three days in which if they wanted, they could have repented and saved themselves from the torment.

Consider next the verse: *فَعَتَوْا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ*. The word *عَتَوْا* means “arrogance and disobedience”. When the preposition *عَنْ* is used after it, the meaning of evasion is also incorporated into it. The implication is that they did not care about this final respite and warning provided by God; instead they arrogantly evaded the directive of God; the result was that a shout of God caught hold of them whilst they helplessly looked on.

The word *صَاعِقَةٌ* means “a shout and scream” and refers to that punishment which came to them in lieu of their rebelliousness. In Sūrah Hūd, the word used is *صَيْحَةٌ* which means “a shout”. The form in which this shout of God manifested itself for them shall be explained later.

There are many things concealed in the words: *وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ*

Firstly, this punishment came very openly; people kept on seeing it and could do nothing to save themselves.

Secondly, it came upon them all of a sudden after which they did not get a moment’s respite. At another place, the words used are: *إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَكَانُوا كَهَشِيمٍ الْمُحْتَظِرِ* (We sent upon them a single shout and they became like the trampled hedge of a sheep-fold builder, (54:31)).

Thirdly, after seeing it, they were totally taken aback; they could not understand what to do. An explanation will be found in the next verse.

---

47. And in the tale of the Thamūd also there is a lesson when it was said to them: “Enjoy yourselves for a while.” So they rebelliously defied the command of their Lord and they were struck by a thunder bolt whilst they looked on.

فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا مِنْ قِيَامٍ وَمَا كَانُوا مُنْتَصِرِينَ (٤٥)<sup>48</sup>

When they heard the thunderous shout they were awe-stricken and shocked. Their state is described thus in Sūrah A'rāf: فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ (٩١:٧) (thereupon the shudder seized them, and they were left lying facewards in their dwellings, (7:91)).

The word *إنتصار* means “to defend”: they were not able to defend themselves against the punishment of God. This word is commonly used in this meaning. A couplet of Imru' al-Qays reads:

فَأَنْشَبَ أَظْفَارُهُ فِي النَّسَا  
فَقُلْتُ هَبْلَتْ أَلَا تَنْتَصِرُ

(The dog inserted his nails in the thighs of that white antelope cow; then I said to him: O Wretch! Defend yourself now at least)<sup>49</sup>

Here readers should pause and try to fully grasp the nature of the punishment faced by the 'Ād and the Thamūd so that their relationship with the oaths mentioned at the beginning of the *sūrah* is clear.

In his *tafsīr* of Sūrah Dhāriyāt, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī has explained the nature of this punishment in the following words:

Anyone who reflects on the details of the destruction of the people of 'Ād mentioned in the Qur'ān cannot escape noticing that the stormy wind which ravaged them was accompanied with the winter clouds which always appear with thunder and lightning. Wherever their destruction is discussed in the Qur'ān, a mention of wind with clouds bereft of water and of thunder is also found. In Sūrah Aḥqāf, the words are:

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ عَارِضًا مُسْتَقْبِلَ أَوْدِيَّتِهِمْ قَالُوا هَذَا عَارِضٌ مُمِطِرُنَا بَلْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَعْجَلْتُمْ بِهِ رِيحٌ فِيهَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ تُدَمِّرُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ بِأَمْرِ رَبِّهَا فَأَصْبَحُوا لَا يُرَى إِلَّا مَسَاكِينُهُمْ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ (٤٦: ٢٤-٢٥)

And when they saw a cloud heading for their valleys, they said: “This is a cloud that will drench us.” In fact, this is what you have sought to hasten: a hurricane bringing a woeful scourge uprooting

48. Then they were neither able to get up nor could they save themselves.

49. Imru' al-Qays, *Dīwān*, 59.

everything at the bidding of its Lord. (46:24-25)

Obviously, all these characteristics are of the winter wind and its clouds. At this time, the northern wind appears in the form of a boisterous cold wind. Such ominous circumstances as destruction and drought ensue everywhere. In Sūrah Qamar, there is a reference to this in the following words: *إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِي يَوْمٍ نَحْسٍ مُّسْتَمِرٍّ* (We let loose on them a stormy wind at a perpetual time of bad omen, (54:19)). Similarly, in Sūrah Ḥamīm al-Sajdah, the words are: *فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِي أَيَّامٍ نَّحْسَاتٍ* (so We sent upon them a violent wind in days of bad omen, 41:16))<sup>50</sup>

After this, Imām Farāhī has cited some parallels from classical Arabic poetry. He then says:

When these winter winds blow, they bring with them red striped clouds, hail, lightning and thunder. Classical Arabic poetry contains all the details of this anecdote ...

In Sūrah Ḥamīm al-Sajdah, it is specified in the account of the people of ‘Ād that the lightning and thunder accompanied their punishment: *فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَقُلْ أَنْذَرْتُكُمْ صَاعِقَةً مِّثْلَ صَاعِقَةِ عَادٍ وَثَمُودَ* (13:41) (If they turn away, then tell them: “I warn you of the punishment of thunder like the one that annihilated ‘Ād and Thamūd,” (41:12)).

It is evident from these details that the Almighty sent on them the punishment of clouds, stormy wind and dreadful thunder; however, their real destruction took place because of the effects of the winds. If the way of adducing the cause from its effect is adopted, one can say that the Almighty sent striped clouds on the Thamūd which lodged within them horrible thunder and a deafening shout the way He sent clouds of thunder and lightning with the wind. Since the Thamūd were destroyed by *sā‘iqah* ... hence only it was mentioned; clouds were not mentioned; however, their existence is a natural corollary. Similarly, in case of the ‘Ād, the wind was mentioned several times; however, clouds were mentioned at one instance only.<sup>51</sup>

50. Farāhī, *Majmū‘ah tafāsīr*, 133.

51. Ibid., 133-134.

وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ مِّن قَبْلُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ (٤٦)<sup>52</sup>

This verse is connected to the whole meaning which can be gauged from the anecdotes cited above: Just as God seized and destroyed other nations, He seized and destroyed before them all Noah's people. There are several examples of connection and co-ordination on meaning. Many of them can be seen in earlier *sūrahs*.

Here at the end, the incident of Noah's nation is briefly referred to. Though as per the historical sequence, it should have been mentioned first, however the Qur'ān here has not adopted the historical sequence. It has directed the attention of the Quraysh to the events whose reports and remnants were found in their own country and to which an earlier verse has referred to. Because of this objective, it was necessary that the mention of the people of Lot (sws) and Pharaoh etc be made first. They were closer to them historically as well geographically. For this reason, they could influence the addressees much more. Then at the end, the earliest anecdote was also mentioned so that the whole history could be sketched before the addressees.

A special aspect of reminding the Quraysh of Noah's anecdote was that just as the effect of the winds sworn by at the beginning of the *sūrah* had the primary role in destroying the previous nations, similarly the people of Noah (sws) were also destroyed by God through the effects of the wind. My mentor Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī has discussed in detail in his exegesis of Sūrah Dhāriyāt the nature of destruction met by the people of Noah (sws). I am reproducing here its essential parts:

A deliberation on the details which are found in the Qur'ān and the Torah regarding the destruction of the people of Noah (sws) shows that the primary reason for their destruction was the effects of the winds. It is mentioned in Sūrah 'Ankabūt:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِ فَلَبِثَ فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ عَامًا فَأَخَذَهُمُ  
الطُّوفَانُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ (١٤:٢٩)

And We sent forth Noah to his people, and he dwelt among them for a thousand years less fifty. Thus the flood seized them while they were sinners. (29:14)

The word (*tūfān*: storm) is worthy of deliberation in particular. It

---

52. And before this We seized the folks of Noah too. They were also a disobedient people.

literally means “to circulate and move in circles”. The Arabs would use it to refer to stormy winds which move while rotating very fast in circles.<sup>53</sup>

After citing some examples from classical Arabic poetry in support of this meaning, Imām Farāhī says:

There exist in other languages too similar words or words of similar meaning for such stormy winds. In Persian, it is called *gardbād*. In English, the word cyclone is used for it. In Egyptian mythology, the god of wind was called typhoon. A special feature of this wind is that it causes heavy rains and sea water becomes turbulent. I myself have seen such a storm in Karachi. A storm emerged from the eastern side of the Indian ocean and passed on to the western side. It caused very heavy rains. Ships collided with the mountains. Great losses in life and wealth were witnessed. The circumstances which arose in the deluge of Noah (sws) as mentioned in the Qur’ān and the Torah are very similar to this. In Sūrah Qamar, the words are:

فَفَتَحْنَا أَبْوَابَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَاءٍ مُنْهَمِرٍ وَفَجَّرْنَا الْأَرْضَ عُيُونًا فَالْتَقَى الْمَاءُ عَلَى أَمْرٍ قَدْ  
قُدِرَ (٥٤: ١١-١٢)

So We opened the gates of heaven with water pouring forth, and caused the earth to burst with gushing springs. The waters met at the point decreed. (54: 11-12)

In the Torah, it is written

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. (Genesis 7:11)

In Sūrah Hūd, the words are:

وَهِيَ تَجْرِي بِهِمْ فِي مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ (١١: ٤٢)

And the ark moved on with them amid mountainous waves. (11:42)

Mountainous waves result when storm winds are blowing.<sup>54</sup>

53. Farāhī, *Majmū‘ah Tafāsīr*, 134.

54. Ibid., 134-135.

At the end, Imām Farāhī has summarized the discussion in the following words:

It is evident from these details that a cyclonic storm was encountered by the People of Noah (sws). It caused heavy rain. Water from the nearby seas burst out of the shores and waves started rising from all sides. In this storm, Noah's ark landed at the mount of Jūdī.<sup>55</sup>

### A Look at the Sequence of Events

I have referred to the essential details of the underlying wisdom of the events which have been mentioned above under their relevant verses. My mentor Imām Farahī has devoted a whole section on this and related some very subtle points in it. I will cite the important parts of this section below. Imām Farahī says:

One aspect of the anecdote of Abraham (sws) and Lot (sws) narrated here is very evident: the element of glad tidings and warning exists simultaneously. A little deliberation shows that the situation of the wind which is sworn by here was no different. At times, it is a boon and at times it is a bane. The comprehensive nature of the anecdote of Abraham (sws) required that it should occupy the beginning.

After this, the anecdote of the people of Lot (sws) is related. The reason for this was that the Arabs would get the chance to pass by their overturned and ravaged cities and see their signs and remnants from their very eyes. Moreover, the initial oaths: *وَالذَّارِيَاتِ ذَرْوًا* (فَالْحَامِلَاتِ وَفُرًا (٢-١) (1-2)) bear more harmony with the incident of destruction of the People of Noah (sws). They were destroyed by tempestuous winds which covered them with sand and pebbles. Such was the quantity of this rubble that it totally concealed their cities.

Furthermore, what is said in an earlier verse: *وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ* (٢٠) (and in the earth and yourselves also are signs for those who have conviction (20)), is substantiated by the anecdote of Noah's people, as has been explained earlier.

---

55. Ibid., 136.



After this, Moses' anecdote is cited. This has been related in the Qur'ān at many instances and has important lessons to be learnt from. It has a very clear affinity with the later oaths: *فَالْجَارِيَاتِ يُسْرًا* (then lift a burden, then glide slowly, (3-4)). This has already been explained earlier.

Another point which needs to be kept in consideration is that in anecdotes which begin with the name of the prophets the element of glad tidings is dominant. After that, in anecdotes which are related by the names of nations the element of warning and admonition is dominant. Amongst the nations, the 'Ād and the Thamūd are specially mentioned. The reason for this is that the punishment which visited them came in the form of striped clouds (*وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الْخُبُكِ*) (and striped winter clouds bear witness)). Reflection will show that the sequence which is found in the oaths is the same as the one found in that of the nations. In the mention of the 'Ād and the Thamūd, the 'Ād were mentioned first because not only were they historically earlier but also because of the fact that the punishment which came upon them was a result of the effects of winds and clouds.

As far as the anecdote of Noah (sws) is concerned, it is an immortal sign from God of His mercy on all the nations and peoples. The following verse testifies to this reality:

إِنَّا لَمَّا طَغَى الْمَاءُ حَمَلْنَاكُمْ فِي الْجَارِيَةِ لِنَجْعَلَهَا لَكُمْ تَذْكِرَةً وَتَعِيَهَا أُذُنٌ وَاعِيَةٌ  
(٦٩: ١١-١٢)

And when the water exceeded the limits, it is We Who carried you upon the ark to make this incident a reminder for you and that retaining ears may hear and retain it. (69:11-12)

This anecdote is an amalgam of the miracles found in the earth and the heavens, the winds and the clouds, the water and the ship. Because of this comprehensive nature, it occupies the status of an anecdote in which arguments drawn from the world within man and the one outside him are all amalgamated. Thus it was very apt with regard to the testimonies borne by the winds stated earlier and the signs found in the heavens and the earth and within man stated later that the anecdote of Noah (sws) be recounted and portray all these realities before the eye.

Moreover, the ‘Ād and the Thamūd were given the vicegerency of this earth after the people of Noah (sws). For this reason, it was very appropriate that with their mention, the people of Noah (sws) also be mentioned. Other examples of this also exist in the Qur’ān:

وَأَنَّهُ أَهْلَكَ عَادًا الْأُولَىٰ وَثَمُودَ فَمَا أَبْقَىٰ وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ مِّن قَبْلُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا هُمْ أَظْلَمَ  
وَأُطْغَىٰ (٥٣:٥٠-٥٢)

And it is He who destroyed the ancient ‘Ād and the Thamud also, sparing no one, and before them the people of Noah also. (53:50-52)

Readers should pay special attention to the words: وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ مِّن قَبْلُ

Since this anecdote is a famous and ancient one and common to all nations, a brief reference to it was enough; moreover, it was presented as the final anecdote. Furthermore, because of conciseness a mere change in style was enough to afford it the status of an independent and important tale. Thus the words وَ فِي نُوحٍ were not used as used earlier in وَ فِي مُوسَىٰ and وَ فِي عَادٍ. On the contrary, the words used are وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ so that this changed style of its own sounds the importance of this anecdote.<sup>56</sup>

#### Section IV: Verses (47-60)

In the subsequent verses, the Almighty while drawing attention to His signs of power and providence has threatened people of reward and punishment. In this regard, a reminder is also sounded regarding the belief of monotheism so that it becomes evident on people that everyone will face the same one God; no other being will be able to save them from God’s grasp. In the end, an assurance is sounded to the Prophet (sws): the attitude his nation is adopting towards them is not new; the same attitude was adopted by every nation towards their respective messengers; so he should patiently continue with his task and ignore the miscreants; he should call those who pay heed; the Almighty will help him and his companions at every step; he does not need the help of any one other than God; those who are asking to hasten the advent of the punishment should be told to desist from this behaviour; when the time appointed for them expires only then will the punishment appear and it would indeed be very severe on them.

56. Ibid., 137-138.

**Text and Translation**

وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ (٤٧) وَالْأَرْضَ فَرَشْنَاهَا فَنِعْمَ الْمَاهِدُونَ (٤٨) وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (٤٩) فَفِرُّوا إِلَى اللَّهِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ مِنْهُ نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ (٥٠) وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ إِنِّي لَكُمْ مِنْهُ نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ (٥١) كَذَلِكَ مَا أَتَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا قَالُوا سَاحِرٌ أَوْ مُجْنُونٌ (٥٢) أَتَوَاصَوْا بِهِ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ طَاغُونَ (٥٣) فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَمَا أَنْتَ بِمَلُومٍ (٥٤) وَذَكَرَ فَإِنَّ الدَّكْرَى تَنْفَعُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٥٥) وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ (٥٦) مَا أُرِيدُ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ رِزْقٍ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ يُطْعَمُونَ (٥٧) إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِينُ (٥٨) فَإِنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذُنُوبًا مِثْلَ ذُنُوبِ أَصْحَابِهِمْ فَلَا يَسْتَعِجِلُونَ (٥٩) فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ يَوْمِهِمُ الَّذِي يُوعَدُونَ (٦٠)

And We built the heavens with power and indeed We are Mighty. And We have spread out the earth; so how excellently do We spread out! And We have created all things in pairs that you may receive a reminder; therefore, hasten to God. I am from Him an open warner for you. And set up no God besides Allah. I am from Him an open warner. (47-51)

In a similar manner, whenever a messenger came to their ancestors they regarded him to be a sorcerer or one possessed. Have they made this will to one another. They are but a people rebellious. So turn away from them. You have no blame on you now. And keep on reminding because reminders benefit those who believe. (52-55)

I have created the jinn and men only that they worship Me. I seek no sustenance from them, nor do I want that they should feed Me. Indeed, God is the Provider, the Mighty and the Powerful. (56-58)

Thus for these wrongdoers, there is a time fixed like that of their companions before; so they should not ask to hasten it. For these disbelievers there is destruction on account of the day of theirs of which they are being warned. (59-60)

**Explanation**

وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ (٤٧)<sup>57</sup>

The common meaning of the word أَيْدٍ is “the hand”; however, it also signifies power and might. The fact that it is not undefined is to magnify its importance. The word مُوسِعُونَ signifies that that His dominion and

57. And We built the heavens with power and indeed We are Mighty.

authority are very vast. The greatest of tasks is not beyond Him.

While co-ordinating this verse to the ones above in which historical arguments are cited in favour of reward and punishment, God has directed attention to His power and might which every person can see by observing the vast expanse of sky and its majesty above him. The implication is that how can it be difficult for the God Who can bring into existence this strong and limitless sky to recreate mankind once it dies and becomes dust. At another place, the words used to convey this meaning are: (٢٧: ٧٩) *أَأَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ السَّمَاءُ بَنَاهَا* (Is it more difficult to create you or the heavens? He made it. (79:27))

The words *وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ* are meant to dispel a misconception: it is not that after creating this vast expanse of the sky all His powers have been exhausted and He cannot do anything further; His power is expansive and embracing; He can do whatever He intends to whenever He want to; nothing is beyond His control. At other instances, this topic is also referred to by saying that God created the heavens and the earth in six days and He was not a bit tired: *وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ وَمَا مَسَّنَا مِنْ لُغُوبٍ* (٣٨: ٥٠)

*وَالْأَرْضَ فَرَشْنَاهَا فَنِعْمَ الْمَاهِدُونَ* (٤٨: ٥٨)<sup>58</sup>

After the heavens, attention is now directed at the earth that how nicely it has been spread out and how wonderfully well is God at this. A reflection on the earth will not only reveal the greatness and majesty of God but also His providence. As a result of this reflection, every sane person reaches the conclusion that the God Who has created this earth and provided in it various means and resources to nourish and nurture man has not done something without a purpose. It is against His mercy and providence to do something meaningless. It is an essential requisite of His mercy and providence that He bring a day in which every person is held accountable for the life he spent in this world – whether it was spent in the obedience of God or whether it was spent following one's own whims. If a person spent his life in God's obedience, he is worthy of being rewarded for his gratitude, and if he followed his own desires, he deserves to be punished for his rebelliousness. This topic is discussed in the Qur'ān at various places in different styles. It shall be further explained in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Nabā'.

The expression *فَنِعْمَ الْمَاهِدُونَ* is meant to point to the various manifestations of mercy and providence from which it is evident that the Creator of this world is not merely someone who possesses immense

---

58. And We have spread out the earth; so how excellently do We spread out!

power but also just as His power is immense; similarly, there is no limit to His mercy, wisdom, sustenance and graciousness. All these attributes entail that He bring forth a day in which He administer justice between mankind and His complete justice and complete mercy manifest themselves on that day. If this does not happen, then His attributes of mercy and providence stand refuted whereas every nook and corner of this universe bears evidence to them.

وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (٤٩)<sup>59</sup>

This verse directs our attention to another special aspect of this universe and this aspect too encompasses within it an argument for reward and punishment.

An elucidation of this concise statement is that God has created everything in pairs in this universe. Thus the heavens and the earth have been mentioned earlier. Everything fulfils its purpose and meaning together with its counterpart. This on the one hand furnishes an argument in favour of monotheism: a wise and sagacious being has created this world; He is above and beyond this universe and controls everything and by creating harmony between its various components makes them a means of producing conducive results in subservience to His power and wisdom. On the other hand, this also furnishes an obvious argument in favour of the Hereafter. The reason is that when everything in this world exists in pairs and everything fulfils its objective with its counterpart, it is essential that this world also have a counterpart so that its deficiency be compensated by it. This counterpart is the Hereafter. After believing in the Hereafter, this world becomes purposeful and meaningful, and in the absence of this belief, this world becomes a meaningless and worthless thing. For this very reason, the Qur'ān has asked all those who do not believe in the Hereafter whether they think that they have been created without a purpose and that they will not be returned to God. This argument has been elaborated upon at its appropriate place. Here the words لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ are meant to direct attention to the reality that the existence of everything in this world in pairs serves as a reminder that this world also has a pair through which it reaches its culmination and that pair is the Hereafter.

فَافْرُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّي لَكُمْ مِنْهُ نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ (٥٠)<sup>60</sup>

The implication is that when the Hereafter is sure to come, then this

59. And We have created all things in pairs that you may receive a reminder;

60. Therefore, hasten to God. I am from Him an open warner for you.

necessitates that they desist showing animosity to the messenger of God and that they run towards God and prepare for the day when everyone will be held accountable for his deeds and when no one except God will be of any benefit to anyone.

The words *إِنِّي لَكُم مِّنْهُ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ* mean that the Prophet (sws) is an open warner from God so that before the advent of the Hereafter he is able to warn people of it and so that on that day no one will have the excuse that no warner came to inform them of it; as an open warner, he is warning them of the events and horrors of that day; the responsibility of the consequences now rests on them.

The veiled reference found in the expression *نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ* has already been explained at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*. The word *مِّنْهُ* signifies the fact that the Prophet (sws) has specially been sent by God to warn his people. Some people have regarded *مِّنْهُ* to be a preposition of *نَذِيرٌ*. However, this opinion is against linguistic principles of Arabic as well as parallel verses of the Qur'ān.

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ إِنِّي لَكُم مِّنْهُ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٥١)<sup>61</sup>

This is not a repetition of what was said previously; it unveils another reality: people should not remain in the misconception that when the Hereafter will come, their alleged deities and intercessors will save them from God's grasp. They should not ruin their fate by relying on such imaginary supports. On that day, they will face God alone and all other supports will be of no use to them. The Prophet (sws) has also been entrusted with this mission from God that he explain to them fully that God has no partners.

I have been explaining at various places in this *tafsīr* that in the first place the Idolaters would regard the Hereafter to be improbable and if at all they believed in it as a supposition they thought that their matter would be presented before their deities who through their influence would save them from the grasp of God. This notion had rendered the Day of Judgement to be absolutely ineffective in their eyes. To negate this false notion of theirs, the Qur'ān always mentions the belief of monotheism with the Hereafter. Examples can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*. A similar warning is sounded here.

كَذَلِكَ مَا أَتَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا قَالُوا سَاحِرٌ أَوْ مُجْنُونٌ (٥٢)<sup>62</sup>

61. And set up no God besides Allah. I am from Him an open warner.

62. In a similar manner, whenever a messenger came to their ancestors they regarded him to be a sorcerer or one possessed.

An assurance is sounded here to the Prophet (sws) that he should not show grief on their attitude. He is not the first to encounter this; previous nations too have adopted the same attitude with their respective messengers.

The words *سَاجِرٌ أَوْ مَجْنُونٌ* signify the fact that when on their demand, their messengers showed them the signs of God, these people regarded them to be sorcerers, and when they were warned of the punishment of the Hereafter, they were regarded as men possessed. The words *سَاجِرٌ* and *مَجْنُونٌ* are cited here as examples. The implication is that they invented one excuse or another to oppose their messengers. In a similar way, the miscreants of the Prophet's nation too are fabricating stories to malign him. Miscreants have always behaved with the messengers of God in this world. It is not that the Prophet (sws) has been negligent of or lacking in his duties nor he is the only person who has faced this situation; so he should not lose heart; in fact, with perseverance, he should combat the circumstances he is facing the way previous messengers did so with resoluteness.

أَتَوَصَّوْا بِهِ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ طَاغُوتٌ (٥٣)<sup>63</sup>

This is an expression of amazement at the similarity of attitude adopted by the miscreants: it is as if the miscreants of every nation have made a will to the ones who will come later that whenever a messenger comes to them they should behave similarly. Thus every coming generation very faithfully clung to this will made by its predecessors.

The words *بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ طَاغُوتٌ* unveil the actual reality: the real cause of this similarity in attitude is that these people [the Quraysh] also are rebellious like the rejecters of the messengers of the previous nations. This similarity in temperament is the real reason that they have stuck to their ill-ways like their predecessors and they will meet a similar fate.

فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَمَا أَنْتَ بِمَلُومٍ (٥٤)<sup>64</sup>

The Prophet (sws) is told to ignore these people who use every opportunity to show their animosity to him; he has discharged his responsibility as a messenger of warning them and communicating to them the truth; he will not be held accountable for it before God and will not be asked in this regard; in fact, they themselves are to blame and shall soon see the fate their attitude has led them to.

63. Have they made this will to one another. They are but a people rebellious.

64. So turn away from them. You have no blame on you now.

وَذَكِّرْ فَإِنَّ الذِّكْرَ تَنْفَعُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٥٥)<sup>65</sup>

Though the Prophet (sws) should ignore the miscreants and the rebellious elements, he should continue to guide those who are ready to listen to him. The seekers of faith benefit from his reminders and instruction. It is evident from this that the directive of ignoring people relates to the rebellious leaders of the Quraysh who because of conceit were not prepared to listen to anything yet the Prophet (sws) was anxious that they embrace faith so that this could be instrumental in strengthening the new faith and pave the way for others to accept it. This expedience in itself was significant, and for this reason the Prophet (sws) wandered after them for a considerable period of time; however, when the truth had been conclusively conveyed to them, and it became evident that these rocks will not budge from their place the Almighty stopped him from wasting his time on them.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ (٥٦) مَا أُرِيدُ مِنْهُمْ مِّن رَّزْقٍ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ يُطْعَمُوا (٥٧) إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِينُ (٥٨)<sup>66</sup>

After directing the Prophet (sws) to ignore the leaders of the Quraysh, two important realities are pointed out in these verses.

Firstly, if God has created jinn and men, then it is not because of any need of His so that He should keep on pampering them in all circumstances; He has created them to reap blessings and high rank destined for them by Him by duly worshipping Him and being obedient to Him. For this very purpose, He sent His messengers so that people get to know the actual reality. However, the responsibility of the messengers is to only delineate the truth. He is not responsible that people also necessarily accept the truth presented by him. The messenger has fulfilled his obligation. If people are not accepting his calls, they are only taking themselves closer to doom and are not in any way harming God and His messenger so that their pleasure should be won at every cost.

In other words, this verse states the reason on account of which the Prophet (sws) was directed in the previous verse to ignore the leaders of the Quraysh: without these arrogant people none of God's tasks will suffer so that he should be so anxious and over-concerned to go after them.

Secondly, the provisions needed to call people to the religion of God

65. And keep on reminding because reminders benefit those who believe.

66. I have created the jinn and men only that they worship Me. I seek no sustenance from them, nor do I want that they should feed Me. Indeed, God is the Provider, the Mighty and the Powerful.



are found with the call: those who are the proponents of this call should trust God only; they should fully keep in consideration the fact that God has created them to worship Him and to be obedient to Him. This is the purpose they were created for and this should be their aim in life which must be fulfilled at all costs. They can sacrifice everything for this but cannot sacrifice it for anything. If they fear that for this crime of theirs, their enemies will financially rout them even then they should stick to their stance and rest assured that if they will not deviate from their purpose of life the Almighty, against the wishes of their enemies, will provide for them from where neither they nor their enemies can ever think of. It is God alone Who provides and nourishes all and His schemes are very well-grounded. The power of the greatest enemies cannot overcome His power.

This, in other words, is an assurance sounded to the Prophet (sws) and his companions in the times when the disbelievers were planning to dislodge them from Makkah and impose a financial embargo on them; the Prophet (sws) and his companions are told that they should adhere to their purpose of serving and worshipping the one and only God – the purpose for which God has created them. The true provider and sustainer is God. He shall provide for them in a manner they cannot even think of. The obligation of the human beings is to serve and worship their Lord. Providing for them is the responsibility of God, and in no way is He lacking to fulfil them. This subject is specially found in the Qur'ān at instances where the Prophet (sws) is directed to ignore the affluent among the Quraysh and persevere on his stance. Some examples of such verses are given below:

وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا لَا نَسْأَلُكَ رِزْقًا نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوَى  
(١٣٢:٢٠)

Enjoin prayer on your people and be diligent in its observance. We demand of you no provision: We shall Ourselves provide for you and final success is for the pious. (20:132)

At another instance, the words are:

لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَخَفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ  
لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٨٨:١٥)

Do not look at what We have given some groups of the disbelievers nor grieve at their state of affairs and bend you arms of affection on

the faithful. (15:88)

After understanding the context and background of these verses, let us take a look at their components.

The word عِبَادَة is used in its broad sense in وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ: ie worshipping God and obeying His directives. The purpose is to bring forth the real objective of life so that each person knows the objective he must live and die for. It should remain clear that worshipping God is required not because He is in need of worship; on the contrary, the Qur'ān has specified at a number of place that man himself is in need of it because the stairway to their own elevation is this worship. If they deviate from it, their status is not more than that of animals; in fact, they become even worse. Here the jinn and men are mentioned as creations of equal status because God has blessed both of them to exercise their free will and both are equally accountable before God and will deserve the same reward and rank if they duly worship Him.

The words مَا أُرِيدُ مِنْهُمْ مِّن رِّزْقٍ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ يُطْعِمُونِ explain the fact that the Almighty has not created man and jinn to fulfill any of His needs so that without them some of His tasks would not be achieved. He has neither imposed on them the responsibility of providing for His creatures nor is He Himself in need of being provided for so that He want Himself to be fed by them; on the contrary, He Himself is responsible for providing and sustaining them. It needs to be kept in consideration that the status of a person who makes the effort to provide for himself and his family is no more than that of a means. It is only God who causes his efforts to bear fruit. Without God's blessings, all of his works is bound to end up in vain. The Qur'ān thus says: (٦٤-٦٣: ٥٦) أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَحْرُثُونَ أَأَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ (have you reflected on what you sow? Is it you who nourish it or We? (56:63-64)).

The words وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ يُطْعِمُونِ are a refutation of a false notion of polytheist nations whereby they thought their deities consume and relish the animal sacrifice presented to them.

The words إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِينُ imply that difficult circumstance should not lead a person to any doubt regarding the providence and sustenance of God. It is God Who in reality provides all and He is mighty and powerful. Adverse circumstances and resistance from people cannot defeat His schemes.

Imām Farāhī has explained the expression ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِينُ in the following words:

Since there is a stoppage (*waqf*) at the word مَتِين its declension is not

known and when this is so no question arises about any difference in its recital. However, the question about its declension does arise? Some regard it to be declined in the genitive and thus an attribute of the word قُوَّةٌ. The word refers to the strand of a rope and in Arabic the word مَتِينٌ is a very common word to signify the strength of a rope. A question does arise here: the word قُوَّةٌ is feminine and the word مَتِينٌ is masculine. The answer to this question is that the word مَتِينٌ is of the category of فَعِيلٌ which in Arabic is used both for masculine and feminine genders. Thus, for example, the Qur'ān says: إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (56:٧) (God's mercy is close to the righteous, (7:56)).

Some other people regard it to be declined in the nominative qualifying ذُو الْقُوَّةِ; however, nowhere else in the Qur'ān has the word مَتِينٌ ever been used as an attribute of God. Thus it is essential that its subject (fā'il) be regarded to be suppressed ie المتين قوته. In this way, this difference will only be of declensions; there will be no essential difference in meaning.<sup>67</sup>

فَإِنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذُنُوبًا مِّثْلَ ذُنُوبِ أَصْحَابِهِمْ فَلَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ (٥٩)<sup>68</sup>

The word ذُنُوبٌ denotes a filled bucket. It is not used for any empty bucket. The meaning of this word was elevated to denote "share".

A couplet of Abū Zu'ayd reads:<sup>69</sup>

لعمرك والمنيا غالبات  
لكل بني أب منها ذنوب

(I swear by your life that there is no escape from death; it has a share in the sons of every father)

In this verse, the word ذُنُوبٌ refers to the period of life allotted to the disbelievers. The words لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا refer to the leaders of the Quraysh whose attitude is being discussed here. In other words, just as the Almighty gave respite to their earlier compatriots (reference is to the 'Ād and the Thamūd etc) so that they could do what they wanted to and complete their term, in a similar manner, God has also granted the

67. Farāhī, *Majmū'ah Tafāsīr*, 148-149.

68. Thus for these wrongdoers, there is a time fixed like that of their companions before; so they should not ask to hasten it.

69. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 1, 392.

Quraysh a time of respite so that the truth from God is conclusively conveyed to them. This period has to end some time and the fate with which they are being threatened with is bound to come before them. So they should not hasten to call for the punishment they are being threatened with thinking that this period is unlimited. This subject is discussed in the Qur'ān at many places. Thus for example: **وَرَبُّكَ الْغَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَعَجَّلَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ بَلْ لَهُمْ مَوْعِدٌ لَّنْ يَجِدُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ مَوْثِقًا** (your Lord is forgiving and merciful; had it been His way to punish them immediately for their sins, he would have instantly sent punishment to them; but He has set for them a predestined day from which they cannot find any refuge, (18:58)).

**فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ يَوْمِهِمُ الَّذِي يُوعَدُونَ**<sup>70</sup>

The words **فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ** are general, they signify the disbelievers of the Quraysh who while regarding the warnings of the Prophet (sws) to be mere bluff were demanding the punishment merely to pester the Prophet (sws); they were asking him to bring it about if it was to come for they would not believe in it without seeing it. The verse tells them not to hasten that day. That day will be very severe. No one will be able to give refuge to them because of that day from the eternal ruin they will face on it.

With the blessing of God, this brings me to the end of this *sūrah's tafsīr*. **فَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ** (so gratitude be to Him for this).

Rahmānābād

18<sup>th</sup> April 1977 AD

28<sup>th</sup> Rabī' al-Thānī 1397 AH

---

70. For these disbelievers there is destruction on account of the day of theirs of which they are being warned.